END "BROKEN WINDOWS" THE EDITORS || SAVING THE PLANET, TOGETHER NAOMI KLEIN

THE Nation. 150

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DUMPING TENANTS

AND

MAKING A FORTUNE IN NEW YORK CITY REAL ESTATE

DW Gibson • Michael Sorkin

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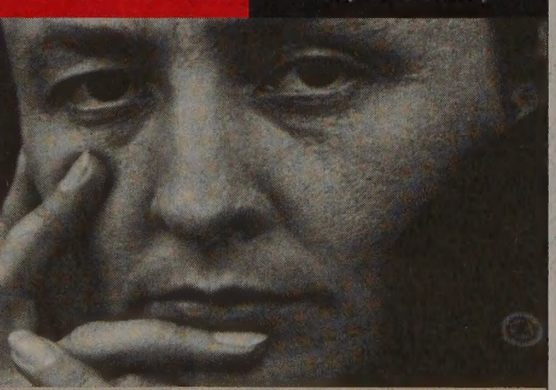
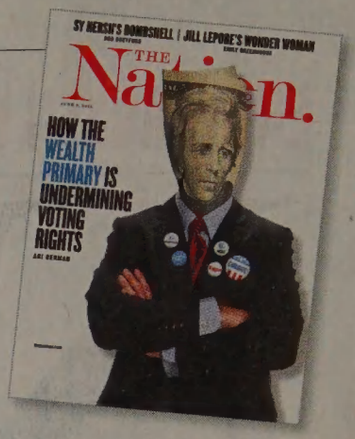


March 6, 1986:
Georgia O'Keeffe Dies


SY HERSH'S BOMBSHELL | JILL LEPORE'S WONDER WOMAN
The Nation.
HOW THE WEALTH PRIMARY IS UNDERMINING VOTING RIGHTS
ARI BERMAN

Letters

@thenation.com

Magic Bullets, Dangerous Shields

Katha Pollitt's clarion essay ["Magic-Bullet Birth Control," June 8] is a stark indictment of male politicians who want to make pregnancy irreversible. Their fetal protectionism imposes sectarian religious doctrine on our "free" country, denying women—mostly poor—a choice. Nations that do better in maternal and child health allow safe abortion as an option, while promoting contraception. Conservatives also oppose end-of-life choice, reflecting the religious tenet—starting with Adam and Eve—that human will is evil. As with the fetus, we sanctify patients in permanent vegetative states, such as Terri Schiavo.

E. James Lieberman, MD
Potomac, Md.

I had an immediate, visceral reaction to Katha Pollitt's column. I am a victim of the Dalkon Shield and have almost died twice, had two surgeries, and was hospitalized an additional four times because of severe pelvic inflammatory disease resulting from the IUD. I have learned never to put anything in my body unless it is proved to be safe and there are no other options.

On the other hand, good for Colorado. Its experimental program's results are superior and a "no-brainer." I am disgusted, but not surprised, that shortsighted, fact-ignoring zealots have squashed the program's expansion. I wonder how these people would react if *they* were required to be emotionally and financially responsible for the "unborn children" who'd result from essentially outlawing birth control—birth control that reduces teen pregnancy and abortion. How silly of me to apply logic!

I am no longer in my childbearing years and have not kept up-to-date on the safety of newer IUDs. I simply wanted to raise a cautionary flag. Please, just be sure that these young women enjoy the benefits of the IUD and none of the health- and life-threatening issues that users of the Dalkon Shield were subject to.

Susan C. Lapekas
Knoxville, Tenn.

All About the Benjamins

Tsk, tsk. Shame on *The Nation* for such an inapt choice of denomination for the head of the bought-and-paid-for politician on the June 8 cover [the image refers to Ari Berman's "How the Wealth Primary Is Undermining Voting Rights"]. Surely that should be the $100 bill's Benjamin Franklin from the neck up, not the twenty's Andrew Jackson.

Joel Solonche
Blooming Grove, N.Y.

Luxury U.

With regard to Michelle Goldberg's "The Gentrification of Higher Ed" [June 8]: I just finished putting a child through Arizona State University in Tempe. I can vouch for the fact that it is not as "nearly free as possible." We had no scholarships and paid cash for all four years. Not only did the tuition increase every year my son attended, but the additional fees were killers. These were fees to help the general population—nothing in which my kid participated, but they were required nonetheless. What a money pit!

Anchor No 2

No Country for Old Bridges

I was stunned by the shameful behavior of House Speaker John Boehner in response to questions regarding the May 12 Amtrak derailment, discussed in John Nichols's excellent comment "Our Derailed Infrastructure" [June 8]. Boehner knows full well that this is just another symptom

Comments drawn from our website
letters@thenation.com

(continued on page 26)

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since 1865

End "Broken Windows"

Nearly a year ago, Eric Garner's death on Staten Island while being arrested for selling loose cigarettes illustrated just how easily things get out of control with "broken windows" policing. It prompted a nationwide reexamination of the illogical premise that cops can best combat violent crime by racking up busts on petty offenses like littering, jaywalking, or playing music too loudly. Garner's death was the first in a disturbingly long string of police killings of unarmed black men and children over the past 12 months. These outrages have radicalized what ought to be a self-evident statement that black lives matter.

And yet, despite this scrutiny, the philosophy of "broken windows" policing still retains credibility with the mayors, councils, and police chiefs of most major American cities. If anything can shatter that consensus, it should be the suicide of 22-year-old Kalief Browder in the Bronx. Four years ago, Browder was arrested for stealing a backpack. Unable to make a $10,000 bail, he was held in Rikers for three years without trial; the charges were ultimately dropped. As *The New Yorker* reported, Browder was locked in solitary for two years and subjected to constant abuse. His family and lawyer say the ordeal scarred him permanently. He attempted suicide once while in jail, another time shortly after his release. On June 6, he succeeded in hanging himself. His mother discovered his body when she stepped into her backyard and looked up.

Browder's tragic story points to the most damning indictment of "broken windows" policing. It's not just that it escalates so easily to fatal violence; it's that "broken windows" corrodes every aspect of criminal justice—and destroys the lives of untold numbers of people it doesn't manage to kill. Roughly 90 percent of those arrested for misdemeanors in New York City are people of color.

Even before Browder's death, his story helped prod reforms at Rikers. Mayor Bill de Blasio announced in April a plan to clear the facility's backlog of unnecessarily incarcerated people. But while moving people through Rikers more quickly is crucial, the real problem is the number of people put there in the first place.

From New York City to suburban McKinney, Texas, we are past the point of mere procedural reform. We saw yet again in McKinney how the implicit bias that cops carry into unnecessary encounters with black people easily escalates to violence. As Officer Eric Casebolt shoved his knees into 15-year-old Dajerria Becton's back, he wildly waved his gun at her teenage friends—all armed with nothing more than bathing suits and towels and guilty of nothing more than holding a boisterous pool party in a white neighborhood. The encounter could just as well have ended in one of the teens' deaths as it did in Casebolt's resignation.

Yes, body cameras, inspector generals, and better training may help change the tenor of policing. And in New York City, the gradual decriminalization of marijuana possession and the diminished use of stop-and-frisk are having an impact. But after a year of public scrutiny over policing's excess in black neighborhoods, what's required now is a more fundamental break with the past.

Instead, the most prominent defender of "broken windows," NYPD Chief Bill Bratton, has descended into absurdity. Recently, he complained that he can't hire more blacks as cops because "so many of them have spent time in jail." At the same time, he steadfastly defended the very policy that created this inequity. This circular logic cannot be squared by incremental reform. The politics will be tough, but it is time our leaders acknowledge "broken windows" as an immoral, ineffective, and racist idea—and toss it into the dustbin of history.

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DC BY THE NUMBERS

2

Presidents who entered office never having married

24

Women who served as first ladies without being married to a president

1858

Year that the term "first lady" first appeared in print; it described President James Buchanan's niece, who served in the role usually reserved for the president's wife (Buchanan was a bachelor)

1993

First year that a first lady—Hillary Clinton—occupied an office in the West Wing

"I've got a lot of friends. We'll have a rotating first lady."

Lindsey Graham, when asked by the Daily Mail Online who would serve as the bachelor candidate's first lady

The TPP Tipping Point

A revolt by liberal Democrats heralds a new politics.

The rebellion of House Democrats that blocked the president's trade deal with Asia is more than a political humiliation for Barack Obama. The defeat shocked Washington, where the cynical rule is "to get along, you go along." Even though the Obama-Boehner-McConnell forces are attempting to resuscitate the "fast-track" gimmick, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) fiasco will be remembered as the start of something far bigger—the revival of the Democratic Party as a born-again advocate for working people and economic justice.

After 25 years of losing out to Wall Street and corporate interests, the party's faithful base managed to take down its own president's sweetheart deal with big money. The left-liberal policy groups and grassroots activists agitating for change stood their ground against the power elites and, for once, they triumphed.

Labor is ready to talk, but doubts Obama will listen.

This may be premature, but I suggest the fast-changing dynamics may be springtime for the *New* New Democrats on the party's left. Led by organized labor and AFL-CIO president Rich Trumka, this informal coalition includes environmentalists, social-justice advocates, people of color, defenders of civil liberties, small businesses, and others who are also regularly ignored or injured by the party's dominant power brokers.

COMMENT

Disregard for the party faithful began with Bill Clinton back in 1992, when labor was edged aside. Wall Street replaced it as the senior managing partner of the Democratic coalition. Clinton ran on "Putting People First," but he governed according to the needs of big business and finance. His permissive policies on so-called "free-trade" globalization were especially damaging to American workers and middle-class prosperity.

Barack Obama comfortably embraced that relationship with Wall Street and relied on its influential thinkers for investor-friendly economic policy. He did little to reverse the damage caused by the sector, proposing instead more concessions to the needs of finance capital. Lots of people in the party warned Obama that he was heading into a buzz saw with the TPP. He ignored them. Even worse, he got a little nasty with those resisting his proposal, like Senator Elizabeth Warren. Surrounded by advisers from Citigroup and Goldman Sachs, he scolded labor leaders for fighting the last war.

Whether in ignorance or arrogance, the president didn't seem to realize that his smooth reassurances were actually inflaming grassroots anger. People knew what happened to them when their factories were closed and the jobs moved to low-wage workers abroad. And people have not forgotten the role of the Democratic Party in messing up their lives. The TPP looked to some like an opportunity for payback.

When members of Congress tried to explain this to him, Obama responded by personalizing the political question. I am your president. A vote for the TPP is a vote for me. Stick to the regular order of things, he told them. The dismissive put-down simply deepened the anger. Forced to choose between him and their angry constituents, they chose their constituents.

A different sort of political leader might swallow his pride and start a serious conversation with his opponents. Is there a deal to be made that would cut out some of the more odious corporate plums in the TPP in order to get something that labor-liberal critics might accept? Labor officials are ready to talk, but doubt Obama will listen.

As for Hillary Clinton, her prospects as Democratic candidate for president are now directly threatened by the party's growing divide. The moneyed interests remain in charge of the party, and Clinton has tried not to choose sides. That doesn't sound like a strategy that can survive until November 2016.

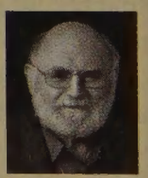
Beyond presidential politics, something even more profound may now be unfolding. The rank and file of both parties are fed up with establishment leaders and eager to challenge them. On the Democratic left, the spirit of reform is resurgent, with politicians and advocates advancing strong new ideas for confronting inequality. Indeed, we may be witnessing the initial stages in the breakdown of the imperial presidency. For two generations, both parties and both houses of Congress mostly went along with this debasement of the governing order, letting the White House make the big decisions and take the blame if things went wrong. The country, however, has now reached a point where imperial decision-making no longer works for the common good.

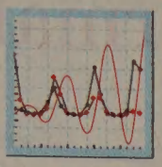
The politics that follow will be chaotic, for sure. Established powers will feel threatened and try to derail these popular rebellions. Yet this turmoil has the potential to liberate the democratic order from corporate influences and persuade angry, anxious people to seek political power and act again like citizens.

WILLIAM GREIDER

Nation *Honors*

Victor Navasky, publisher emeritus and former editor of The Nation, is being recognized by the Hugh M. Hefner First Amendment Awards for lifetime achievement for his commitment and significant contribution to the protection and enhancement of the rights enshrined in the First Amendment to the US Constitution.





THE SCORE/BRYCE COVERT + MIKE KONCZAL

Guilty of Pregnancy

In early June, a little-noted bill got a historic boost. For the first time ever, Republicans sponsored a pregnancy bill, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, which would require the country's employers to make small adjustments—allowing more frequent bathroom breaks, providing a stool to sit on, switching a worker's duties so they don't include heavy lifting—so that pregnant employees can stay on the job.

It sounds like a small thing, and for most employers it would be. But this is the first year that two Republican senators got on board with the idea that half the workforce may at some point become pregnant.

Discrimination against pregnant employees is the clearest sign we have that the American workplace still operates under the archaic idea that men go to work and women remain in the home. Charges of pregnancy discrimination filed with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) rose 65 percent between 1992 and 2007, outpacing the increase of women joining the labor force. Over the last two decades, more than 40 percent of the gender-based cases related to discriminatory hiring were about pregnancy. The most high-profile one was brought by Peggy Young against her former employer, UPS, which denied her request to be switched to light duty, something it offered disabled workers and even those whose driver's licenses were suspended. Her case made it all the way to the Supreme Court, where this year it won a favorable ruling. Other outrageous cases abound. A nonprofit maintained a "no pregnancy in the workplace" policy. A woman says she was fired less than two weeks after she told her investment-bank employer she was pregnant. Another says she was fired on her very first day of work after she disclosed her pregnancy.

Charges of pregnancy discrimination have outpaced the increase in women joining the labor force.

Today the majority of women who become pregnant work. The share of first-time mothers-to-be who stayed on their jobs increased from less than half in 1960 to two-thirds by 2008. And those who choose to keep working do so longer, with more than 80 percent staying on the job into the last month of their pregnancies. This likely springs from financial necessity: Women are the primary source of income for 40 percent of American households. Meanwhile, without the guarantee of paid maternity leave, many are probably squirreling away as much time off as they can cobble together for after their babies arrive.

What would women need to stay comfortably in the workforce? Among women ages 18 to 45 who had recently given birth, 71 percent needed more frequent breaks at work, 61 percent needed a schedule change or time off for the doctor, and more than half needed to change their responsibilities in order to do less heavy lifting or be able to sit more often. Yet an estimated quarter-million women are told each year they can't have the changes they need to keep working while pregnant. Even more women simply never ask: Over 40 percent who needed more breaks never requested them, and nearly the same share who needed a change in duties never brought it up.

All of this flouts labor law, as the EEOC recently told the country's employers, but continues nonetheless. The good news is that states have beefed up protections for pregnant workers on their own. Forty-five states ban discrimination against pregnant women, while 14 states and Washington, DC, require employers to make accommodations.

But the frequency of cases speaks volumes about how often pregnant employees have to worry about whether their health status threatens their jobs. It takes time and resources to bring a complaint against an employer; far more women are likely experiencing the same thing but are keeping silent.

Women have made up about half the workforce for a quarter-century. Their presence means the economy is 11 percent larger than it would have been if they stayed home. But bosses of both genders still haven't wrapped their heads around what it means to employ people who might become pregnant, which means that half of their employees' jobs could be put at risk over their ability to bear children.

BRYCE COVERT

Workers Don't Get Pregnant, Do They?

Even though more women are in the workforce, persistent pregnancy discrimination is a sign that the workplace still thinks all workers are men.

More pregnant workers than ever.
First-time moms who work during pregnancy:
44%
1960
66%
2015
82%
work into their last month
More discrimination than ever.
Pregnancy discrimination complaints have risen at a faster rate than the influx of women into the workplace.
65%
Increase in pregnancy discrimination charges filed with the EEOC 1992–2007
Increase in women joining the labor force 1992–2007
22%

Tracy Loeffelholz Dunn/The Nation

ALWAYS LEFT, USUALLY RIGHT

The Beginning of the End for Student Debt?

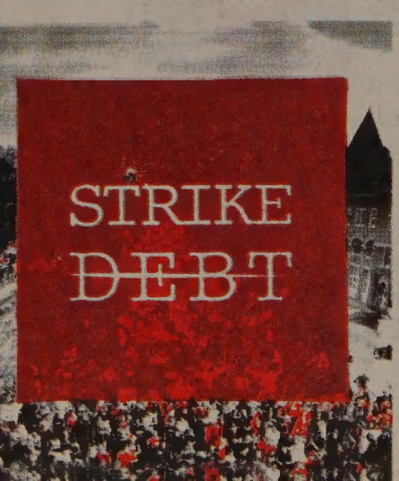
The US Department of Education announced last week that it will forgive outstanding loan debts of former students of Corinthian Colleges, the now-shuttered for-profit chain that preyed on those whom it described internally as "isolated" and "unable to see and plan well for the future." *The Nation*'s Michelle Chen has been keeping an eye on this story for months.

February 23 Fifteen former Corinthian students say they will refuse to pay off their student loans. "Their defiance aims to expose structural problems driving the financialization of higher education," Chen writes.

March 31 The Occupy-inspired Debt Collective, which helped organize the debt strike, hand-delivers to the DoE hundreds of "Defense to Repayment" requests asking the government to forgive Corinthian students' debt because the company lied about future job prospects for the students. A protest leader tells Chen that the government should forgive the debts all at once, "automatically and immediately."

June 8 The DoE agrees to forgive Corinthian students' debts on an individual basis. "The debt strikers argue that the complex legal process for Defense to Repayment is unnecessary, since...the evidence of fraud is glaringly clear," Chen writes. "Meanwhile, many debtors spiral deeper [into] financial desperation, unable to secure steady employment with their essentially worthless degrees."

RICHARD KREITNER



Eric Alterman

Our Stupid Politics

Why do news organizations take delusional presidential campaigns so seriously?

With roughly 16 months to go before the 2016 presidential election, it has already become clear that the long trend toward increasingly worse election coverage is not about to be interrupted. The primary problem—and I am already sick of saying this—is the inability of mainstream-media professionals to acknowledge the dominant role that unrestricted bribery plays in shaping our political discourse. Making matters worse is the related problem of a Republican Party in thrall to a series of postures determined, on the one hand, by its super-wealthy funders and, on the other, by the ignorant superstitions of its fundamentalist base.

But there is a third problem at the center of our political universe: that of voluntary journalistic stupidity. It's not that the journalists are stupid. It's that they believe they must pretend to be stupid in the service of a single narrative designed to last only until the next one replaces it—sometimes in a matter of minutes.

A perfect example of this phenomenon—call it the Politico-ization of our politics—was the respectful coverage accorded the recent announcement of George Pataki's campaign for president. Polling at 0 percent at the time of his announcement (well behind "none of the above," which is no small feat in a field of nearly 20 candidates), Pataki is no more likely to play a meaningful role in the nomination process than I am. He has not held public office since losing his reelection bid for governor of New York in 2006. Since then, he appears to have been doing nothing much save toying with the delusional notion of a presidential campaign. As *Washington Post* reporter David Fahrenthold noted, "This January on 'Jeopardy,' three contestants were shown a photo of Pataki's face—but none could remember his name. Last month, when he shook hands with patrons in a New Hampshire Chipotle, many said afterward that they had no idea who he was" (and no, he was not wearing dark sunglasses à la Hillary).

Larry Sabato is one of those quotable pundits who always pretend to know something regardless of the question. But when asked by *The New Yorker* what Pataki had been doing for the past decade, he admitted he had no idea. Florida Republican strategist Rick Wilson summed up the campaign's chances best when he predicted that the sight of a Pataki victory was as likely as that of "a monkey flying out of a unicorn's ass."

Everything about Pataki's campaign is ridiculous except where it is nonexistent. He gives no evidence of a significant organization, backers, or financial support. You can't even tell who he is in the announcement photograph he released. And yet as soon as Politico broke the nonstory of his announcement, virtually every news organization covered it. (*The Wall Street Journal* even sent out a "news alert." It should have been a "missing person's report.") The award for the most egregious coverage goes to *The New York Times* for carrying at least 20 stories mentioning Pataki on its website, with a significant percentage focusing on his candidacy as if it were a real thing. This is journalism on intellectual autopilot.

A few reporters took the opportunity to explore the genuine issue that *The Wall Street Journal* posed in its pretend-serious May 31 article, titled "Can the GOP Accept a Pro-Choice, Gun-Regulating Centrist?" Certainly the paper's editorial page could not, nor could the funders and fundamentalists who control the party. So how and why did this happen? After all, Pataki's positions on abortion and gun control are majority ones, the latter by a landslide. And yet if such beliefs leave a Republican candidate dead on arrival, might that indicate something worth investigating?

> The New York Times *has carried at least 20 stories mentioning Pataki's candidacy, many of which treated it as if it were a real thing.*

The *Times*'s Jim Dwyer—who is a metro columnist, and does not regularly drink the Kool-Aid that turns so many national political reporters into morons—demonstrated some rare good sense about how to cover the announcement. Even when Pataki was flying high after beating liberal hero Mario Cuomo in deep-blue New York, Dwyer pointed out, he was barred from speaking at the 1996 Republican National

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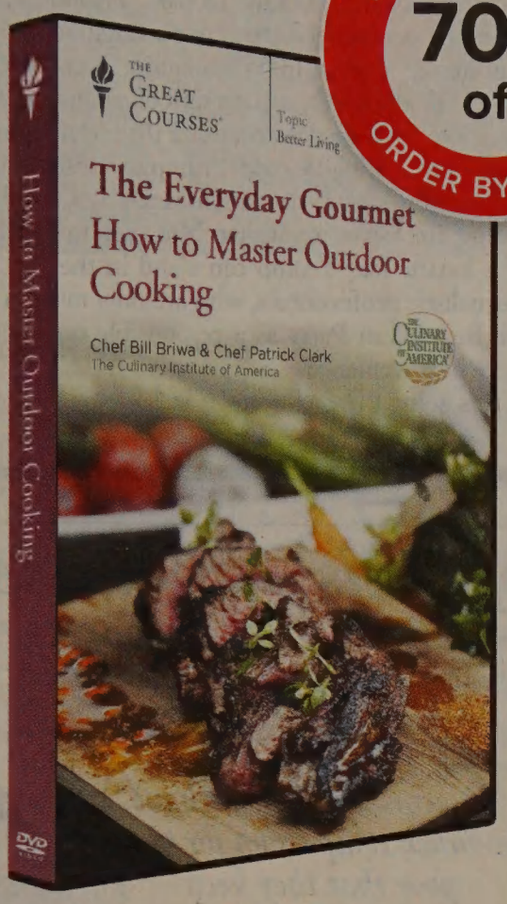
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Convention, lest anyone notice that its platform called for the denial of citizenship (and therefore possible deportation) to people who were, like the governor, the descendants of undocumented immigrants.

Not even the obvious idiocy of a lunatic like Trump can stand in the way of reporters on a mission to portray Republicans as responsible.

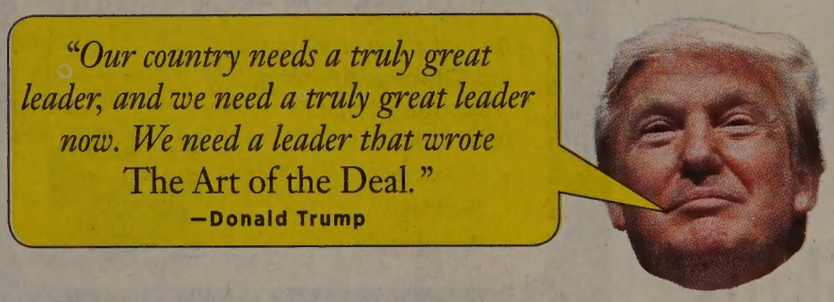
Pataki's pathetic plea for attention could easily have been ignored. *The Providence Journal*, for instance, all but disregarded the presidential campaign announcement of Lincoln Chafee, Rhode Island's former governor and senator, who spent most of his career as a Republican. According to Politico, Chafee's "hometown paper has offered nothing more than wire reports and a stinging editorial suggesting that his bid will give Rhode Island a bad name." Unlike Bernie Sanders—there will be more about his campaign in a future column—and even Martin O'Malley, Chafee will not affect the Democratic race in any meaningful fashion. Even so, insiders rushed to find a nefarious motive for this unusual outbreak of journalistic common sense.

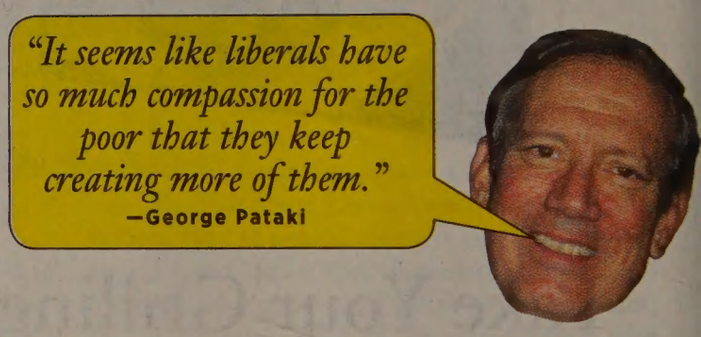
It is a key rule among media columnists that, however awful the coverage may appear, it can always get worse. *The Washington Examiner*'s Byron York recently wrote a column called "Taking Donald Trump Seriously," in which he complained that "not a single national political reporter or analyst in Washington, New York, or anywhere else thinks Trump is a serious candidate." Of course, York also felt forced to recognize that even Donald Trump has trouble taking Donald Trump seriously, what with his "apparently stream-of-consciousness talk" at Republican events. But never mind that. Not even the obvious idiocy of a lunatic like Trump can stand in the way of today's journalistic professionals, who are on a mission to portray the Republican Party as a responsible one, and reality a mere inconvenience.

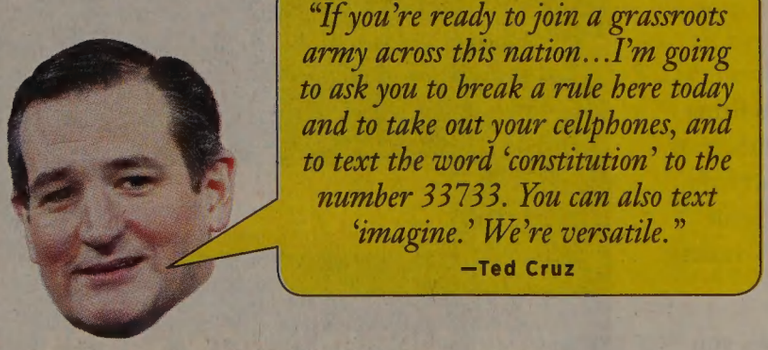
It's going to be a bumpy ride. ■

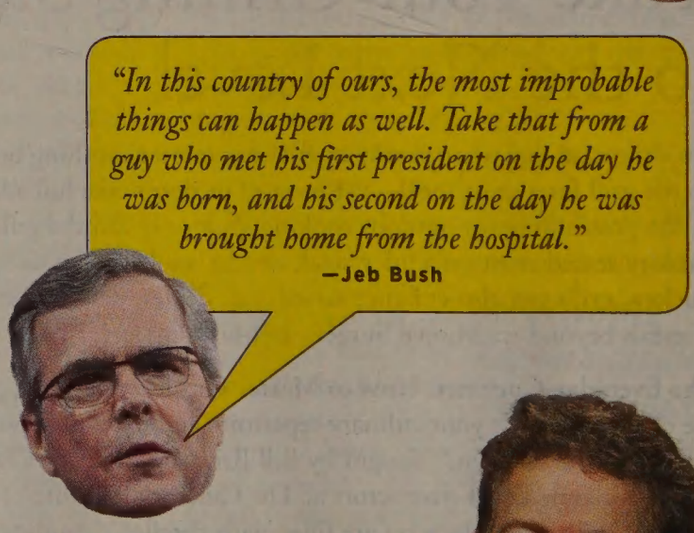
Chain of Tools: The GOP Hopefuls Announce

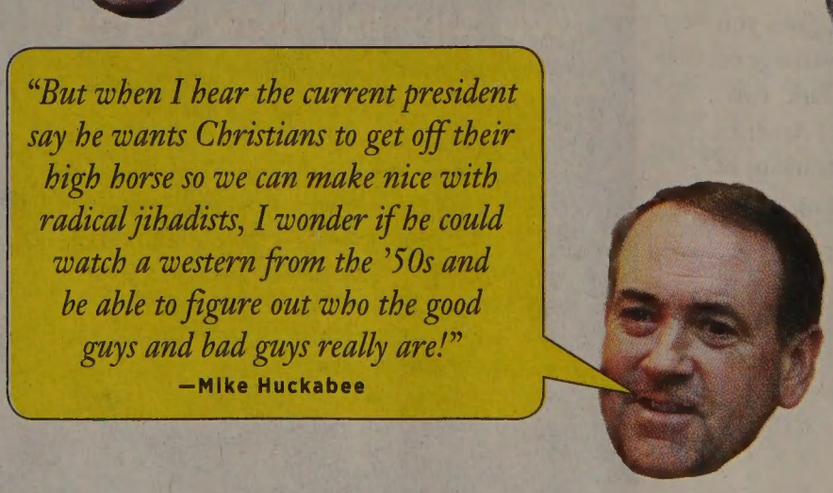
"Today, Donald Trump became the second major Republican candidate to announce for president in two days," Democratic National Committee press secretary Holly Shulman said in a statement on June 16. "He adds some much-needed seriousness that has previously been lacking from the GOP field, and we look forward to hearing more about his ideas for the nation."

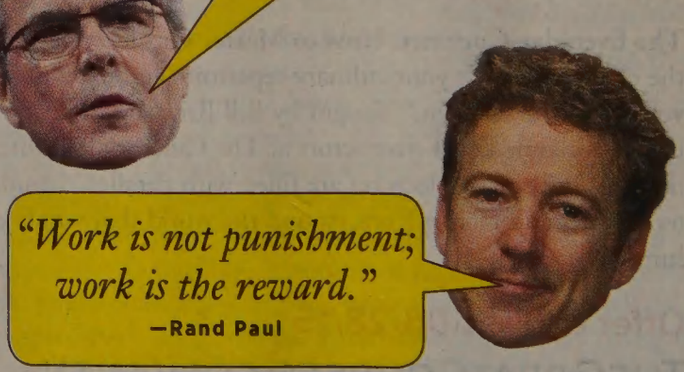

"Our country needs a truly great leader, and we need a truly great leader now. We need a leader that wrote The Art of the Deal."
—Donald Trump




"If you're ready to join a grassroots army across this nation…I'm going to ask you to break a rule here today and to take out your cellphones, and to text the word 'constitution' to the number 33733. You can also text 'imagine.' We're versatile."
—Ted Cruz


"In this country of ours, the most improbable things can happen as well. Take that from a guy who met his first president on the day he was born, and his second on the day he was brought home from the hospital."
—Jeb Bush


"But when I hear the current president say he wants Christians to get off their high horse so we can make nice with radical jihadists, I wonder if he could watch a western from the '50s and be able to figure out who the good guys and bad guys really are!"
—Mike Huckabee



From the first *Nation* Cuba trip, June 2014

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Peter Kornbluh

The longtime Cuba correspondent for *The Nation*, Peter Kornbluh is the Cuba analyst at the National Security Archive in Washington, DC, and the editor of *Bay of Pigs Declassified*, co-editor of *The Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962,* and co-author of *Back Channel to Cuba: The Hidden History of Negotiations Between Washington and Havana*, published in fall 2014.

Charles Bittner

The Nation's Academic Liaison, Charles Bittner has taught journalism and sociology at Southern Methodist University and has for many years hosted *The Nation*'s annual seminar cruise.

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- **Visit** the Latin American Medical School, where Cuba trains thousands of doctors from all over the world, and the prestigious University of Havana for a private tour of the grounds and classrooms.
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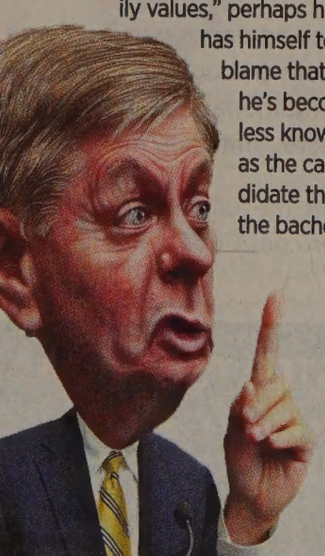
CULTURAL POLITICS

All the Single Laddies

In her widely reviewed new book *Spinster*, Kate Bolick charts her attempts to live beyond the marriage plot. Why, Bolick asks, should marriage define a 21st-century woman?

Or a man, for that matter. Blue-eyed South Carolinian Lindsey Graham, a far cry from the liberal, high-heeled Manhattanite smiling from *Spinster*'s cover, has seen his GOP presidential campaign derailed by bachelorhood. After joking to the Daily Mail Online that he would have a rotating first lady, he was forced into a round of apologetic interviews. One Vox headline read, with great pathos, "'I don't think I'm a defective person': Lindsey Graham's moving defense of being single."

Shouldn't we all feel proud to be single *or* married, perhaps closer to our family, as Graham claims, or to our female friends, as Bolick does? As Samhita Mukhopadhyay writes at TheNation.com, "If only it was that easy." Singleness remains taboo in part because it's so damn hard to pay for life in America with one salary. Mukhopadhyay points out that "we can't relieve the social and economic pressure on single women by just identifying as and relishing in being a spinster. We need... access to affordable childcare, pay equity, or paid family leave." Since Graham has, historically, opposed these things due to his membership in the party of "family values," perhaps he has himself to blame that he's become less known as the candidate than the bachelor.



Gary Younge

Free Trade's True Cost

The price is paid in forced migration and refugee crises.

If there's one thing more disconcerting than Republicans opposing Barack Obama at every turn, it's the rare occasion when they actually agree with him. True, the gridlock resulting from their dysfunctional obstinacy is unproductive. But there is something comically reassuring about the predictability of their childlike tantrums. If Obama said Rachel Dolezal was white, the GOP would swear blind she is black.

So when Obama recently teamed up with congressional Republicans to try to ram through the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) against the wishes of the labor unions, his own party, and the progressive movement in general, he was modeling the kind of bipartisanship we could all do without.

The TPP is a deal among the United States and 11 other nations in Asia, Australasia, and the Americas that has been negotiated mostly in secret and that would lower tariffs, gut regulations, depress wages, and wreck the environment, all in the name of "free trade." The first attempt at passing it through Congress failed after a Democratic rebellion. As of this writing, Obama was working with Republicans to try again.

The TPP is an appalling initiative on its own terms. Labor unions and others are right to point out that it will hurt American workers. Moreover, Obama's pursuit of it is as clear a betrayal of his candidacy as one is likely to find. When running for president in 2008, he said: "I voted against CAFTA [the Central American Free Trade Agreement], never supported NAFTA [the North American Free Trade Agreement], and will not support NAFTA-style trade agreements in the future." Former Labor Department secretary Robert Reich has described the TPP as "NAFTA on steroids."

But left there, the analysis of the TPP's flaws would be entirely solipsistic. The fact that it will be bad for America isn't actually the worst thing about it. When viewed through the wider lenses of underdevelopment and migration, the pact illustrates much of what is wrong with the neoliberal global framework the West has erected over the last 30 years.

Given Congress's refusal to pass comprehensive immigration reform, what the TPP helps build is a world in which capital is free to roam wherever it pleases, while borders remain closed to people. While machines and money may scour the globe in search of cheaper labor, weaker unions, and looser regulations, people are stopped from crossing borders in search of the kind of work that might pay them enough to feed their families.

It's a system in which economic and military power go hand in hand. "The hidden hand of the market will never work without a hidden fist," *The New York Times*'s Thomas Friedman once wrote. "McDonald's cannot flourish without McDonnell Douglas, the builder of the F-15. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps."

Such is the huge gated community that is now the West, spreading chaos and deprivation with its economic and foreign policies and then retreating into its fortified laager to repel those who attempt to flee the mayhem it has wrought. "Free trade," when dictated by corporations and defined by the powerful, is actually anything but free—and the cost is ultimately paid in human lives.

What the TPP helps build is a world where capital is free to roam wherever it pleases, while borders remain closed to people.

You can see them perish in rickety vessels on the Mediterranean, having been fleeced by unscrupulous traffickers in Libya—who are thriving thanks to the nation's near-total collapse following the bombing four years ago—only to be repelled by European nations.

You can see them in Mexico, where, thanks to NAFTA, corn production collapsed when farms and smallholdings withered against competition from US agribusiness.

But it is perhaps most starkly evident right now in Haiti, the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere.

In June 2009, five years after the United States ousted Haiti's democratically elected president,

ILLUSTRATION: RIGHT, ANDY FRIEDMAN; LEFT, CC2.0

Jean-Bertrand Aristide, its Parliament passed unanimously a law raising the minimum wage to $5 a day. David Lindwall, the deputy chief of mission there for the United States, believed this new rate "did not take economic reality into account," and so worked with factory owners and contractors to push the hourly rate down to 31 cents.

With poverty in Haiti so endemic, entrenched, and enduring, people already had few options. In 2005, I went to Dajabón, a town in the Dominican Republic that borders Haiti, where it was possible to buy a Haitian child for $100.

"Half of all Haitians struggle to eat even once a day," Helen Spraos, Christian Aid's Haiti representative, told me. "Once they reach rock bottom, the one way they can provide for their children is by sending them to live in the cities or in the Dominican Republic. There at least they may be fed and have some prospects for making a living."

Many were used as slaves and prostitutes, or were exploited in the sugar fields. Now the Dominican Republic is poised to expel anyone born there to undocumented Haitian parents, deporting them to Haiti, a country many have never even seen.

Neither the West in general nor the United States in particular is uniquely responsible for all of these woes. But when rich nations simultaneously rig trade and raise barriers to migration, they both exacerbate the misery beyond their borders and create the conditions for bigotry to flourish at home. "Globalization, being a force without a face, cannot be the object of ethnocide," points out Arjun Appadurai in *Fear of Small Numbers*. "But minorities can."

It is not poor migrants from the Global South who are undercutting Western wages. It's big business and those legislators who want to let the rich move their money wherever they wish, while preventing the poor from moving their families where they must. ■

TWEET THAT!

The King's Landing 2016 slate just got weaker than the GOP's.

@michelledean, writer Michelle Dean comparing the Republican presidential candidates to the crumbling royal family in HBO's *Game of Thrones*

SNAPSHOT/VAHID SALEMI

Jumping the Barriers

Behnaz Shafiei, the first Iranian woman to compete as a professional motorcyclist, rides her bike through the Alborz Mountains outside Tehran. Shafiei calls herself a pioneer in the struggle to end Iran's restrictive laws on women's participation in sports.

VAHID SALEMI / AP

Calvin Trillin
Deadline Poet

A SHAKY START FOR JEB BUSH

"He has been torn between defending and distancing himself from George W. Bush." —*The New York Times*

Jeb's path was thought an easy stroll,

But George has made it steeper.

So Jeb is likely asking now,

"Am I my brother's keeper?"

BACK ISSUES/1919

Realty vs. "Idealty"

DW Gibson reports in this issue on the shredding of rent-stabilization protections, one symptom of the latest housing crisis in New York City. According to a 1919 *Nation* article, another such crisis followed World War I.

Lack of "a unified scheme of regional development" was one cause of that crisis, wrote 23-year-old Lewis Mumford: "The weakness of the city-planning movement up to the present has been due to its constriction within the present tangle of private property interests. In spite of the opportunity opened by the new transit lines, the entire development of the Bronx and Queens and hither-Brooklyn has been left in the hands of the realty corporations and private builders. It is hardly needful to point out that in this situation the financial profit of ground owner and house builder and loan mortgagee is the primary consideration.... While realty interests are dominant, 'idealty' interests are depressed."

Today, Idealty is the name of a self-described real-estate "brokerage designed for Chicago's creative class: innovative, expressive professionals who choose the city for its liveliness, its authenticity."

Mumford wrote in 1919: "House rents now occupy a disproportionately large place in the urban family's budget. It is fatuous to suppose that private interests will correct this condition, for it is for the benefit of private interests that it exists."

—Richard Kreitner

We Can Only Do This Together

by NAOMI KLEIN

This speech was delivered on June 6, 2015, in Bar Harbor, Maine, as the College of the Atlantic commencement address.

FIRST OF ALL, A HUGE CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL THE GRADUATES—AND TO THE PARENTS WHO raised you, and the teachers who guided you. It's a true privilege to be included in this special day.

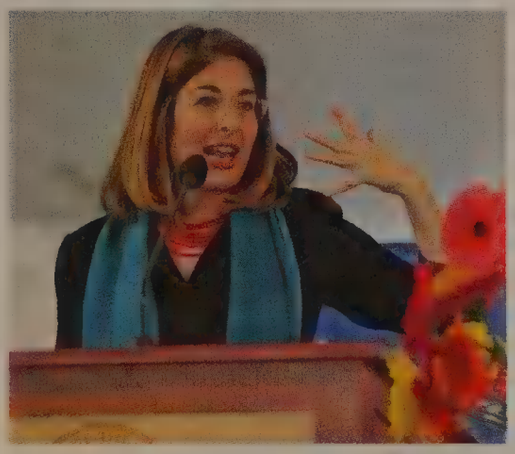
Mine is not going to be your average commencement address, for the simple reason that College of the Atlantic is not your average college. I mean, what kind of college lets students vote on their commencement speaker—as if this is their day or something? What's next? Women choosing whom they are going to marry?

Usually, commencement addresses try to equip graduates with a moral compass for their post-university life. You hear stories that end with clear lessons like: "Money can't buy happiness." "Be kind." "Don't be afraid to fail."

But my sense is that very few of you are flailing around trying to sort out right from wrong. Quite remarkably, you knew you wanted to go not just to an excellent college, but to an excellent socially and ecologically engaged college. A school surrounded by tremendous biological diversity and suffused with tremendous human diversity, with a student population that spans the globe. You also knew that strong community mattered more than almost anything. That's more self-awareness and self-direction than most people have when they leave graduate school—and somehow you had it when you were still in high school.

Which is why I am going to skip the homilies and get down to business: the historical moment into which you graduate—with climate change, wealth concentration, and racialized violence all reaching breaking points.

How do we help most? How do we best serve this broken world? And we know that time is short, especially when it comes to climate change. We all hear the clock ticking loudly in the background.



Naomi Klein delivering the College of the Atlantic commencement address.

But that doesn't mean that climate change trumps everything else. It means we need to create integrated solutions—ones that radically bring down emissions, while closing the inequality gap and making life tangibly better for the majority.

This is no pipe dream. We have living examples from which to learn. Germany's energy transition has created 400,000 jobs in just over a decade, and not just cleaned up energy but made it fairer—so that energy systems are owned and controlled by hundreds and hundreds of cities, towns, and cooperatives. The mayor of New York just announced a climate plan that would bring 800,000 people out of poverty by 2025, by investing massively in transit and affordable housing and raising the minimum wage.

The holistic leap we need is within our grasp. And know that there is no better preparation for that grand project than your deeply interdisciplinary education in human ecology. You were made for this moment. No, that's not quite right: You somehow knew to make yourselves for this moment.

But much rests on the choices we make in the next few years. "Don't be afraid to fail" may be a standard commencement-address life lesson. Yet it doesn't work for those of us who are part of the climate-justice movement, where being afraid of failure is perfectly rational.

Because, let's face it: The generations before you used up more than your share of atmospheric space. We used up your share of big failures too. The ultimate intergenerational injustice. That doesn't mean that we all can't still make mistakes. We can and we will. But Alicia Garza, one of the amazing founders of Black Lives Matter, talks about how we have to "make new mistakes."

Sit with that one for a minute. Let's stop making the same old mistakes. Here are a few, but I trust that you will silently add your own. Projecting messianic fantasies onto politicians. Thinking the market will fix it. Building a movement made up entirely of upper-middle-class white people and then wondering why people of color don't want to join "our movement." Tearing each other to bloody shreds because it's easier to do that than go after the forces most responsible for this mess. These are social-change clichés, and they are getting really boring.

We don't have the right to demand perfection from each other. But we do have the right to expect progress. To demand evolution. So let's make some new mistakes. Let's make new mistakes as we break through our silos and build the kind of beautifully diverse and justice-hungry movement that actually has a chance of winning—winning against the powerful interests that want us to keep failing.

With this in mind, I want talk about an old mistake that I see reemerging. It has to do with the idea that since attempts at big systemic change have failed, all we can do is act small. Some of you will relate. Some of you won't. But I suspect all of you will have to deal with this tension in your future work.

A story: When I was 26, I went to Indonesia and the Philippines to do research for my first book, *No Logo*. I had a simple goal: to meet the workers making the

Naomi Klein is a Nation *columnist and the author of* This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate.

clothes and electronics that my friends and I purchased. And I did. I spent evenings on concrete floors in squalid dorm rooms where teenage girls—sweet and giggly—spent their scarce nonworking hours. Eight or even 10 to a room. They told me stories about not being able to leave their machines to pee. About bosses who hit. About not having enough money to buy dried fish to go with their rice.

They knew they were being badly exploited—that the garments they were making were being sold for more than they would make in a month. One 17-year-old said to me: "We make computers, but we don't know how to use them."

So one thing I found slightly jarring was that some of these same workers wore clothing festooned with knockoff trademarks of the very multinationals that were responsible for these conditions: Disney characters or Nike check marks. At one point, I asked a local labor organizer about this. Wasn't it strange—a contradiction?

It took a very long time for him to understand the question. When he finally did, he looked at me like I was nuts. You see, for him and his colleagues, individual consumption wasn't considered to be in the realm of politics at all. Power rested not in what you did as one person, but what you did as many people, as one part of a large, organized, and focused movement. For him, this meant organizing workers to go on strike for better conditions, and eventually it meant winning the right to unionize. What you ate for lunch or happened to be wearing was of absolutely no concern whatsoever.

This was striking to me, because it was the mirror opposite of my culture back home in Canada. Where I came from, you expressed your political beliefs—firstly and very often lastly—through personal lifestyle choices. By loudly proclaiming your vegetarianism. By shopping fair trade and local and boycotting big, evil brands.

These very different understandings of social change came up again and again a couple of years later, once my book came out. I would give talks about the need for international protections for the right to unionize. About the need to change our global trading system so it didn't encourage a race to the bottom. And yet at the end of those talks, the first question from the audience was: "What kind of sneakers are OK to buy?" "What brands are ethical?" "Where do you buy your clothes?" "What can I do, as an individual, to change the world?"

Fifteen years after I published *No Logo*, I still find myself facing very similar questions. These days, I give talks about how the same economic model that superpowered multinationals to seek out cheap labor in Indonesia and China also supercharged global greenhouse-gas emissions. And, invariably, the hand goes up: "Tell me what I can do as an individual." Or maybe "as a business owner."

The hard truth is that the answer to the question "What can I, as an individual, do to stop climate change?" is: nothing. You can't do anything. In fact, the very idea that we—as atomized individuals, even lots of atomized individuals—could play a significant part in stabilizing the planet's climate system, or changing the global economy, is objectively nuts. We can only meet this tremendous challenge together. As part of a massive and organized global movement.

Here in wealthy countries, we are told how powerful we are as individuals all the time.

The irony is that people with relatively little power tend to understand this far better than those with a great deal more power. The workers I met in Indonesia and the Philippines knew all too well that governments and corporations did not value their voice or even their lives as individuals. And because of this, they were driven to act not only together, but to act on a rather large political canvas. To try to change the policies in factories that employ thousands of workers, or in export zones that employ tens of thousands. Or the labor laws in an entire country of millions. Their sense of individual powerlessness pushed them to be politically ambitious, to demand structural changes.

In contrast, here in wealthy countries, we are told how powerful we are as individuals all the time. As consumers. Even individual activists. And the result is that, despite our power and privilege, we often end up acting on canvases that are unnecessarily small—the canvas of our own lifestyle, or maybe our neighborhood or town. Meanwhile, we abandon the structural changes—the policy and legal work—to others.

This is not to belittle local activism. Local is critical. Local organizing is winning big fights against fracking and tar-sands pipelines. Local is showing us what the post-carbon economy looks and feels like.

And small examples inspire bigger examples. College of the Atlantic was one of the first schools to divest from fossil fuels. And you made the decision, I am told, in a week. It took that kind of leadership from small schools that knew their values to push more, shall we say, insecure institutions to follow suit. Like Stanford University. Like Oxford University. Like the British royal family. Like the Rockefeller family. So local matters, but local is not enough.

I got a vivid reminder of this when I visited Red Hook, Brooklyn, in the immediate aftermath of Superstorm Sandy. Red Hook was one of the hardest-hit neighborhoods and is home to an amazing community farm—a place that teaches kids from nearby housing projects how to grow healthy food, provides composting for a huge number of residents, hosts a weekly farmers' market, and runs a terrific CSA [community-supported agriculture] program. In short, it was doing everything right: reducing food miles, staying away from petroleum inputs, sequestering carbon in the soil, reducing landfill by composting, fighting inequality and food insecurity.

But when the storm came, none of that mattered. The entire harvest was lost, and the fear was the storm water would make the soil toxic. They could buy new soil and start over. But the farmers I met there knew that unless other people were out there fighting to lower emissions on a systemic and global level, then

LAURA KENYON

Zoe Buckley Lennox, an Australian science student, stands in solidarity with Seattle protests against Arctic drilling. In April, Lennox occupied a Shell oil rig in the Pacific.

this kind of loss would occur again and again.

It's not that one sphere is more important than the other. It's that we have to do both: the local and the global. The resistance and the alternatives. The "no" to what we cannot survive and "yeses" that we need to thrive.

BEFORE I LEAVE YOU, I WANT TO STRESS ONE OTHER thing. And please listen, because it's important. It is true that we have to do it all. That we have to change everything. But you personally do not have to do everything. This is not all on you.

One of the real dangers of being brilliant, sensitive young people who hear the climate clock ticking loudly is the danger of taking on too much. Which is another manifestation of that inflated sense of our own importance.

It can seem that every single life decision—whether to work at a national NGO or a local permaculture project or a green start-up; whether to work with animals or with people; whether to be a scientist or an artist; whether to go to grad school or have kids—carries the weight of the world.

I was struck by this impossible burden some of you are placing on yourselves when I was contacted recently by a 21-year-old Australian science student named Zoe Buckley Lennox. At the time she reached me, she was camped out on top of Shell's Arctic drilling rig in the middle of the Pacific. She was one of six Greenpeace activists who had scaled the giant rig to try to slow its passage and draw attention to the insanity of drilling for oil in the Arctic. They lived up there in the howling winds for a week.

While they were still up there, I arranged to call Zoe on the Greenpeace satellite phone—just to personally thank her for her courage. Do you know what she did? She asked me: "How do you know you are doing the right thing? I mean, there is divestment. There is lobbying. There's the Paris climate conference."

And I was touched by her seriousness, but I also wanted to weep. Here she was, doing one of the more incredible things imaginable—freezing her butt off trying to physically stop Arctic drilling with her body. And up there in her seven layers of clothing and climbing gear, she was still beating herself up, wondering whether she should be doing something else.

What I told her is what I will tell you. What you are doing is amazing. And what you do next will be amazing too. Because you are not alone. You are part of a movement. And that movement is organizing for Paris and getting their schools to divest and trying to block Arctic drilling in Congress and the courts. And on the open water. All at the same time.

And, yes, we need to grow faster and do more. But the weight of the world is not on any one person's shoulders—not yours. Not Zoe's. Not mine. It rests in the strength of the project of transformation that millions are already a part of.

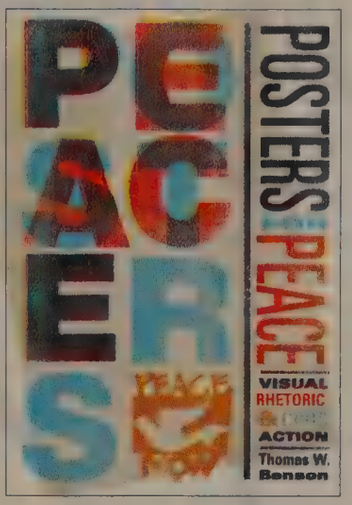
That means we are free to follow our passions. To do the kind of work that will sustain us for the long run. It even means we can take breaks—in fact, we have a duty to take them. And to make sure our friends do too.

Which is why I am going to skip yet another commencement-address tradition—the one that somberly tells graduates that they have finally become adults. Because my strong sense is that most of you have been adults since your early teens.

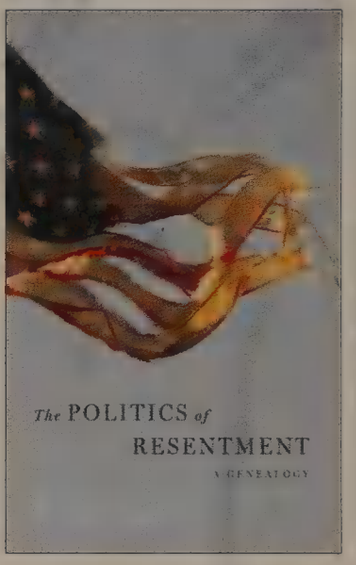
So what I really want to say to you is something else entirely. Make sure to give yourself time to be a kid.

And make sure to truly enjoy this tremendous accomplishment. Congratulations. ■

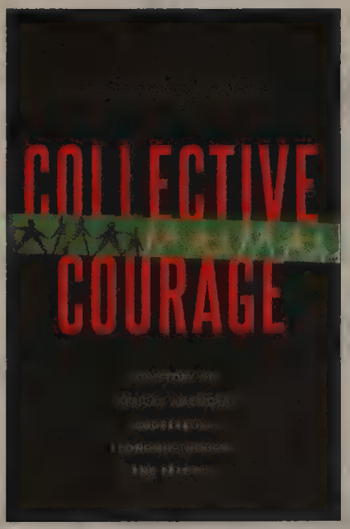
Titles for Our Times



"Thomas Benson has rediscovered and shared a treasure of poster art, along with some history, brilliantly told."
—Tom Hayden



"In *The Politics of Resentment*, Jeremy Engels helps readers understand how resentment has arisen as a political force and how scholars and citizens may respond." —Robert Asen, University of Wisconsin–Madison



"Jessica Gordon Nembhard's book couldn't be more timely. If cooperative economic arrangements have any future we must first learn their vital past."
—Adam Haslett, *In These Times*

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HOW TO DUMP TENANTS AND MAKE A FORTUNE

THE CHAOTIC, ABUSIVE PROCESS BY WHICH NEW YORK'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING IS VANISHING.

BY DW GIBSON

IT IS 7:45 AM, AND 18 REAL-ESTATE professionals are gathered around a conference table in downtown Manhattan, a hair-breadth from Wall Street. They are agents, insurers, asset managers, investors—there is even an architect who uses her allotted 30 seconds of introduction to mention her knack for creating spaces with high-end finishes on economical budgets. Everyone is here to listen to Simon Moule speak.

The topic, as described by the invitation, is "making sense of NYC Rent Stabilization Laws," and Moule is a guru when it comes to understanding what he describes as "millions of rules." The people in this room seek understanding with a specific endgame in mind: increasing capitalization of a building, if not a portfolio of buildings. As the lawyer who introduces Moule puts it: "If you know the rent laws, that's where the juice is. You can really squeeze as much as possible out of a building."

The Rent Regulation Reform Act of 1993 is a central feature of New

SHO WATANABE

York State's rental code. It allows for the deregulation of rent-stabilized apartments. New York City has nearly 1 million such apartments, accounting for just under half of the available units in all five boroughs. That number is falling quickly, however, as New York's high-end housing market continues to balloon from the heat of global capital.

Over the past 30 years, 231,000 units have been released from rent regulation. Between 2002 and 2014, the number of rental units that were affordable for the working poor fell by 27 percent, according to a Furman Center study.

The deregulation of these apartments has become one of the most disruptive forces in the city, as tenants scramble to keep their homes and landlords maneuver to get rid of them. In some cases, landlords seek merely to push individual units into the luxury rental market. But often the goal is to empty a building of renters altogether. As one Brooklyn landlord, who would only speak to me under the pseudonym of Ephraim, explained it: "We don't usually buy buildings with tenants.... They actually bring down the value of the property almost 60 or 70 percent."

So for Ephraim and the people gathered to hear Moule speak, the urgent question is: How do you get around rent regulations?

A FEW DAYS AFTER THE BREAKFAST MEETING, MOULE is seated in a coffee shop offering $3 drip, just south of Union Square. "In the hot areas, people are buying buildings and flipping them," he explains to me, "playing musical chairs with the price."

Moule has amassed more than 20 years of familiarity with the state rental code, and savvy investors come to him to understand how the mind-numbing legislative jargon applies to the buildings they want to buy. "Almost nobody realizes that the true value of a building isn't the bricks and mortar," he says. "The true value is the cash flow and the amount of debt you take on when you buy the building, and those are determined by the rent roll—and the rent roll is determined by the rent-stabilization laws. So many people miss that essence."

Rent-stabilization laws apply, broadly, to buildings constructed in the postwar period from 1947 to 1974, as well as to more recent developments that used tax breaks or public money to build. The rental code makes for dense reading; it's a tangle of bureaucracy. But there is one essential component for tenants: an annual limit on rent increases. The New York City Rent Guidelines Board sets this limit. Each year, the board votes on one of three options: roll back rent for the coming year; freeze rent; or set an allowable increase, generally somewhere between 2.5 percent and 4 percent over the last decade. In 2014, amid whispers of a first-ever freeze or rollback, the board voted for a 1 percent increase.

The final vote this year is on June 24, and there is a growing sense among community organizers and officials in Mayor Bill de Blasio's administration that a rent freeze is a real possibility this time.

But a more fundamental marker is set by the state. Since 2011, the state has allowed for the deregulation of vacant apartments once they can be legally rented for $2,500 a month. At press time, as the legislative session closed, housing advocates were fighting what appeared to be a losing battle to push that number up significantly, if not get rid of it altogether. "So that we don't have what is clearly happening," says Alicia Glen, deputy mayor for housing and economic development, "which is people using every available tool in the toolbox to get to the $2,500 threshold."

"Unless you're leaving the city, a buyout is never going to be a good idea."

—Celia Weaver, Urban Homesteading Assistance Board

DW Gibson is author of the recently published book The Edge Becomes the Center: An Oral History of Gentrification in the Twenty-First Century.

Moule incorporated STM Associates 19 years ago and works with over 300 clients—increasingly, he notes, more pension and portfolio money from around the world. "They know that if they—by good fortune or malfeasance—get rid of low-paying tenants and put in high-paying tenants, they're going to make more money."

The legal way to get rid of low-paying tenants is a buyout. Landlords can offer tenants money to simply leave. This practice has become so popular and generates such substantial business for real-estate lawyers that two of them, Michelle Maratto and Jay B. Itkowitz, released a 33-page document entitled "Tenant Buy Outs! Making Them Happen." It reads like an infomercial script from the opening line: "Sometimes an owner needs a tenant of his or her property out of the way."

The amount of money that a landlord might offer a tenant varies wildly. Ephraim, the Brooklyn-based landlord, estimates he's bought out dozens of tenants, paying each somewhere between $2,000 and $30,000. The real-estate lawyer who introduced Moule at the breakfast meeting—and who *also* asked me not to use his name for fear of losing business—said he has facilitated buyouts ranging from $10,000 to $100,000.

But a lump sum of money—no matter the amount—has limitations. "If you've never seen $20,000 before, it seems like a lot," says Celia Weaver, assistant director of organizing and policy at the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB). "But your rent is never going to be lower than it is right now. Unless you're leaving the city or buying into some form of affordable housing, a buyout is never going to be a good idea."

Across New York City, particularly in Brooklyn, rents have risen sharply over the last several years. Between 2013 and 2014 alone, rents increased roughly 23 percent in both Crown Heights and Boerum Hill, for instance. With rent for market-rate apartments making such steep climbs, and wages remaining mostly stagnant, the loss of each rent-stabilized unit makes the housing problem that much more acute. And buyouts are a driving force.

"As a public-policy matter," says Deputy Mayor Glen, "buyouts are bad in the current regulatory environment." She points to the "vacancy allowance" a landlord earns each time an apartment is emptied, which allows for a rent increase of up to 20 percent and is often enough to break out of rent stabilization. "Because the vacancy allowance is so generous, it's being done to deregulate the apartment." Even still, Glen describes buyouts as a complicated issue. "With any individual case, who am I to tell someone they shouldn't take $100,000?"

WHEN A LANDLORD WANTS TO AVOID THE expense of a buyout, or if a tenant refuses to accept one, more aggressive measures are required. Shekar Krishnan of Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A represents tenants in neighborhoods throughout the borough. "What we see a lot more now," he says, "is landlords physically destroying buildings to force tenants out overnight. It's the method of choice these days."

Originally from Nicaragua, Noelia Calero, 33, has lived in her railroad apartment in Bushwick since she was 9 years old. She sits in a middle room that is hard to define: All at once kitchen and closet and living room, it is a cramped space, packed with boxes stacked to the ceiling along every wall. The table where Calero sits feels like the cleared middle of a storage unit.

Shortly after two brothers, Joel and Aaron Israel, bought her building in early 2013, they sent a letter to Calero and her husband. "They told us they want to change the floor tiles and put paint and fix the bathroom," she says. So Calero and her husband and mother moved all of their belongings out of the kitchen and bathroom. "They said it was going to take a couple of weeks. And we believed them. But then we had two years with no bathroom, no kitchen. Completely demolished."

Calero describes the Israel brothers entering her apartment with a third man who carried a sledgehammer and electric saw. "They took out the walls that divided my bathroom from the neighbor's kitchen. You could just walk right next door. They ripped the walls open and the floors. They completely destroyed the sink that was in the kitchen. In the bathroom, too, they removed the toilet and the sink.... It took them less than two hours and they left."

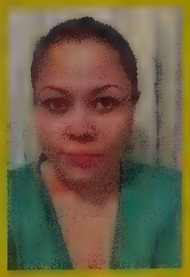
Calero's family lived without running water for 18 months, and for much of that time a hodgepodge barricade of scrap and plywood closed off access to the back half of the apartment, which led to the bathroom and kitchen. The family listened to the sounds coming from the other side of the plywood. "We heard rats and we heard cats fighting back there."

Finally, in December 2014, after she had spent more than two years in court with legal representation from Brent Meltzer of South Brooklyn Legal Services, Calero's landlords were ordered to repair her bathroom and kitchen. And in April of this year, in a highly unusual move, Joel and Aaron Israel were arrested and charged with seven crimes, including fraud, grand larceny, burglary, submitting false documents, and unlawful eviction.

"While it's very hard to know what is an outlier versus a chronic pattern," says Deputy Mayor Glen, speaking about the arrests of the Israel brothers, "I do think there has been a dramatic increase in landlord harassment."

She points to an anti-harassment task force that Governor Andrew Cuomo established in February with Mayor de Blasio and New York State Attorney General Eric Schneiderman, describing it as an opportunity for the city and state to work together to investigate cases like Calero's. "We want to really make sure we have every possible tool in our toolbox when we think that something really rises to the level of criminality."

While tenant lawyers like Krishnan describe the Israel brothers' arrests as justice, many are not satisfied with the bigger picture. "The real question," says Krishnan, "is why didn't these arrests come sooner?" He shows me a batch of newspaper articles documenting tenant experiences with striking similarities to Calero's case. "This is the most rapidly growing trend we're seeing. These landlords feel—and they are criminal landlords—if we can provoke a vacate order from the city government, we can get tenants out overnight, and then it's a long, hard fight to get back in. And if they don't have counsel, it's a fight that is almost impossible."



Noelia Calero's landlord ripped out her bathroom.

"What we see now is landlords physically destroying buildings to force tenants out overnight."

—Shekar Krishnan, Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A

Nefertiti Macaulay's landlord accused her of squatting.

Not all tactics for clearing tenants are so unabashed as those of the Israel brothers. Some landlords choose more subtle, often litigious options. "Baseless eviction proceedings," says Krishnan, "that's usually where it starts."

There are several roads to eviction proceedings: perhaps it's one too many roommates; perhaps it's suspicion of an illegal sublet. Landlords scan Airbnb for units in their buildings, and surveillance cameras are common. Even death can be used to prompt an eviction notice.

At the age of 20, Nefertiti Macaulay moved in with her ailing grandmother. She is 31 now and has been the primary tenant in the apartment since her grandmother's passing in 2007—which is when the landlord contacted Macaulay with a shocking declaration. "A note of eviction saying I am squatting," she says. Her soft voice has to climb a bit higher to get up and over that last word—*squatting*—because it still feels like a violation. She points at the chair near the window where her grandmother spent her last days. "She passed away, and it was thrown at me."

Macaulay's home is spacious, with comfortable furniture and generations of family photos. But rats run across the kitchen, water damage is visible, and the walls have not been painted in nearly a decade. While living with her grandmother, Macaulay had not been added to the lease and none of the bills were in her name. In court, she offered documents signed by the super and the neighbors and the medical care providers who visited her grandmother daily—all confirming that Macaulay lived there. But she did not have a document confirming that she paid for the gas or electricity.

After a court case that spanned a year, the judge let Macaulay stay in the apartment—at a 54 percent markup. Her rent went from $750 to $1,156. "I think they wanted to scare me, so I said, 'I'll take it.'" At times she works two jobs to pay the new rent, but she's grateful to still be in her home. Her landlord has not yet succeeded at emptying the apartment, in large part, because Macaulay has legal counsel. That is a rarity for tenants.

"Ninety percent of tenants in housing court don't have a lawyer," says Krishnan. He estimates that Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A is able to engage just 15 to 20 percent of the tenants who approach his office for legal aid.

Deputy Mayor Glen—who is quick to underscore that she once worked as a legal-aid lawyer—ties this imbalance of power to federal funding for legal-assistance programs; Congress has cut that funding by more than 40 percent over the past decade, according to a Legal Services Corporation analysis. Glen says the city is trying to close the gap. "Recently, we put a ton of money into the budget to expand legal services, particularly in areas where landlord behavior could be on the margins," says Glen. "We want to make sure in neighborhoods where markets are moving so quickly, people have the ability to get a lawyer."

The de Blasio administration has committed $13.5 million for tenant legal services and outlined a plan that would provide an additional $36 million in legal aid for six neighborhoods experiencing rapid change and rezoning: East New York, East Harlem, Flushing West, Long Island City, the Bay Street Corridor on Staten Island, and the Jerome Avenue Corridor in the Bronx. That would be a cumulative $50 million for tenant legal services,

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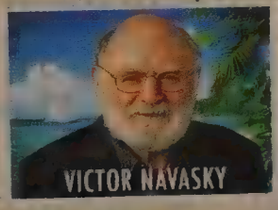

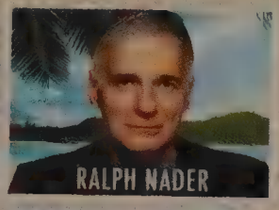

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which Glen points out is eight times the $6 million provided under Mayor Michael Bloomberg.

But it takes more than money when a landlord seeks to simply wear a tenant down with multiple, often simultaneous tactics. Take, for example, Toussaint Wortham, who was approached by his landlord with a $30,000 buyout offer. Wortham turned it down. Then his landlord took him to housing court for installing kitchen cabinets.

Wortham had installed the cabinets five years earlier, with permission and funds from the previous landlord. The old cabinets dated back to 1979, the year Wortham moved into his Crown Heights apartment with his family. He was in the first grade then, and has never lived anywhere else.

"He's been saying he can't take my rent until the case is resolved," Wortham says of his landlord's position. "They bank on the idea that you'll mess that money up. They figure I might see a nice coat that I want, or nice pair of jeans, and I'll spend it. I'm not that kind of person. I've got one pair of jeans."

Still, he admits that it's sometimes hard to keep up his fight, to hunt down one more document or take another day off work to make another court appearance. After a recent adjournment in the ongoing case, Wortham rode the elevator down with his landlord's lawyer, who took the opportunity to remind him that the $30,000 buyout is still on the table.

Simon Moule knows how demoralizing this war of attrition can be. "Tenants file complaints about decreased services or their rent is illegal, and I answer those complaints on behalf of owners. That's where stuff is interesting and difficult. Because I might have a client who I know is a scumbag, and they run their buildings terribly and their tenant is filing a complaint about stuff that's not fixed in their apartment, and I know the stuff isn't fixed in the apartment. But I'm being hired to file an answer as though the owner did fix stuff."

"I know the stuff isn't fixed. But I'm being hired to file an answer as though the owner did fix stuff."

—Simon Moule

While New York State is often cited as a jurisdiction with some of the most pro-tenant rent laws in the country, there is often a chasm between the laws and their enforcement. "The law is whatever you can get away with," says Krishnan. "So many tenants will call us and say, 'I lost my heat and my electricity today and I can't get it back on.' That is one of the most pernicious things." Oftentimes, the utility accounts are in the landlord's name, and the utility companies won't restore service unless the request is made by the person on the account. Krishnan says he has worked with tenants in buildings where the landlord has jiggered wiring in order to prevent restoration of services, or padlocked the meters so that the utility companies cannot gain access.

In a building in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, the tenants lost heat and electricity on a Friday in January. "It was one of the coldest weekends of the year, and no one was available," says Krishnan. "One of my attorneys went to a judge's house on Saturday night to get an emergency order signed. And then he went and served the order to the utility companies to get services back on. That's how screwed up this is."

On a recent May morning, muggy with gray clouds overhead, a dozen or so tenants gathered outside their building at 285 Schenectady Avenue in Crown Heights. Many of them held signs with slogans—We shall not be removed—or large pictures of dead rats in hallways and roaches gathered in darkened corners. A handful of supporters from the neighborhood joined the protest, along with New York State Assembly members Walter T. Mosley and Diana Richardson. Renaissance Realty, the landlord of the building—and of a neighboring building that shares a mortgage—has taken 17 tenants to court because they refuse to sign new leases. The tenants say they will not sign because the new leases will increase their rent by 120 percent. That's a 120 percent increase in two buildings filled with rent-stabilized units.

The 2014 maximum allowable rent increase of 1 percent for rent-stabilized apartments does not apply to 285 Schenectady because of the building's complicated rental history—and an obscure rule that offers a fast track out of regulation for more than a quarter of the city's rent-stabilized units.

Decades ago, a previous landlord at 285 Schenectady performed renovations—or in the parlance of rent regulations, "individual apartment improvements," known as IAIs. The landlord passed along a portion of the renovation costs to the tenants, as prescribed by law. Once the landlord performed the IAIs, he presented the tenants with leases that included two separate rent rates. The first rate was the new "registered" rent, starting at around $800 for the cheapest units. That was far more than anyone could pay in Crown Heights in the 1980s, but it was the maximum increase the New York State Division of Homes and Community Renewal would allow, based on the renovation budget the landlord submitted. The second rate on the lease was a far smaller amount, a "preferential" rate, which is what the landlord actually charged.

When a lease is drawn up with two rates in this way, the landlord reserves the right to switch from the preferential to the registered rent with any new lease. "You can use preferential rents and IAIs together as a sort of gentrification insurance," says the UHAB's Weaver, who is working with the tenants at 285 Schenectady. "As soon as the market rate is somewhat close to what you registered the rent at, thanks to IAIs, you revoke that preferential rate, and the tenant is screwed." When landlords use this rule, the registered rent is often set at or near the threshold at which an apartment is no longer subject to the rent-stabilization laws.

The tenants at 285 Schenectady have been paying a preferential rate—which has steadily increased, along with the registered rent—since 1988. When Renaissance Realty bought the building in April 2014, the company began notifying tenants that the rate would change as each lease came up for renewal. The rent for many units in the building went from less than $1,000 to $2,100.

Of the nearly 1 million rent-regulated apartments in New York City, the state estimates that 25 percent, nearly 240,000, are under preferential rates and subject to sudden increases. Measured against de Blasio's goal to build 200,000 more affordable units, preferential rents alone present a possible net loss of 40,000 affordable units.

Outside 285 Schenectady, Natasha Creese, who has lived in the building for 25 years, ended the rally by grabbing the megaphone and stepping toward the edge of the sidewalk. She eyed the onlookers across the street, and peered up at the buildings around her: "Everyone who's looking out their windows, I know you're hearing me. Look around—your turn will be next." ■

SOCIALIST IN SEATTLE

Kshama Sawant dreams of helping build a bold mass movement for democratic-socialist change. But first she wants to bring rent control to Seattle.

by SARAH JAFFE

KSHAMA SAWANT STANDS AT A PODIUM INSIDE All Pilgrims Christian Church in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood, surrounded by brightly colored posters with messages that range from STOP THE VIOLENCE to NO HOMOPHOBES NO TRANSPHOBES NO ASSHOLES NO EXCUSES. She is speaking to a standing-room-only crowd, calling for the neighborhood to take "collective responsibility" for fixing its problems. "As an immigrant, as a woman, and as a person of color," she tells them, "I know from firsthand experience what it means to even have verbal slurs directed at you. It never leaves you."

Sawant has called the meeting alongside the Gender Justice League to discuss a spike in violence, particularly against transgender women, in the rapidly gentrifying, historically gay neighborhood. She is asking the audience to suggest "neighborhood-based solutions" that she can advocate for. She's the Seattle City Council's newest member, elected in November 2013, and the Council's only socialist—in fact, the only declared socialist in the legislature of a major US city.

The crowd includes young gay, lesbian, and transgender people who live on the street, middle-aged career activists, and even Seattle's mayor, Ed Murray, who briefly takes the podium to talk of his own activist history in that very church and neighborhood. Mostly, though, the elected officials listen as a group of activists speak. It quickly becomes clear that this event will not call for increased policing and stronger hate-crime laws; instead, speakers point out that hate violence often comes from the police. More than one speaker references the Black Lives Matter movement. Jackie Sandberg of Peace for the Streets by Kids From the Streets brings the crowd to its feet with a passionate call for an LGBTQ youth shelter. And speaker after speaker talks about the changes in the formerly queer-friendly Capitol Hill as it has become a trendy neighborhood for Seattle transplants. A few call for rent control.

When Sawant rises to conclude the event, it is this call for rent control that she focuses on, along with Sandberg's demand for a youth shelter. Sawant, who rode a wave of energy around the $15-an-hour minimum wage into office, is aware that fighting for her LGBTQ constituents goes beyond celebrating marriage equality. It includes, she says, tackling the problem of housing. "We hear it from people in the community, 'We need to fight for LGBTQ rights, but, hey, listen, I'm a queer person and the housing unaffordability is hitting me hard—and who's going to fight for me?'" she says a few days after the meeting.

Socialists and other leftists have long played a prophetic role in American politics, challenging mainstream politicians to be bolder.

Proud Comrades: Sawant and her City Council colleague Nick Licata rally for LGBTQ rights at the 2014 Pride parade.

David Goldstein, a former staff writer at *The Stranger* newspaper who is now helping Sawant write her memoir, points out that most politicians treat their queer constituents as "a one-issue group," but Sawant realized early in her campaign that her demand for rent control and higher wages resonated with a community that still faces housing and job discrimination. It has been part of her appeal to the working people of Seattle: that she understands their struggles to pay the rent and bills, that she realizes that the oppression faced by immigrants like her or transgender homeless youth intersects with the issues faced by a growing number of people in today's economy, and that she is unwilling to subscribe to the conventional wisdom about what is politically possible. It is what made a liberal West Coast city already dominated by progressive Democrats vote to elect a socialist from an organization that calls for putting the top 500 corporations under public ownership. And it has helped to keep her popular despite complaints from business owners, mainstream media, and occasionally her own City Council colleagues that she is too divisive.

Sawant is the highest-profile official in the United States to run as a declared socialist—Vermont senator and presidential candidate Bernie Sanders identifies as a democratic socialist, although he has never won an election as such—but she is following a well-trodden path. Socialists and other leftists have long played a prophetic role in American politics, challenging more mainstream politicians to be bolder. From Eugene Debs's presidential campaign from an Atlanta jail to Sanders's eight-hour speech in 2010 denouncing austerity politics and giveaways to the rich, socialists have demanded we face up to inequality and made us consider new ideas that were formerly unthinkable. "[Sawant's win] changes narratives, it changes the realm of possibilities," says Denechia Powell, a housing-rights organizer formerly with the Tenants Union of Washington State.

It is no accident that Sawant has emerged now, in this moment of acute inequality. The Seattle of 2015 is booming—perhaps less conspicuously than the Bay Area, but propelled by many of the same forces. Big tech companies like Microsoft and Amazon provide high-paid jobs for a select group of workers, who then buy or rent homes in trendy neighborhoods and send rents through the roof. But that boom is not hitting the city equally. "People are being displaced and pushed out away from their homes, their schools, their work, everything that they know," says Powell.

Seattle's past, however, prepared it well for this moment. Seattle and Washington State have a long history of left-wing political activism, from the 1919 general strike to the radical longshore workers' union in the 1950s and

CLAY SHOWALTER

Fight for $15. Seattle workers commemorate Martin Luther King Jr. Day by marching for a living wage on January 21, 2014.

'60s, to the 1999 protests against the World Trade Organization, notes Robert Cruickshank, a former staffer for Seattle's previous mayor and currently senior campaign manager at Democracy for America. But as money began flowing in, "you started to get more moderate politics," says Cruickshank. "People on the left wing of the Democratic Party started to feel marginalized."

Enter Sawant. Big money and the Democratic establishment might find her demands unnerving, but her willingness to disrupt business as usual has helped the city accomplish a lot. "There's something about [her] keeping us unsettled that forces us to do a better job," says her colleague Mike O'Brien, a five-year City Council veteran.

And while the average Seattleite may not be signing up to join Socialist Alternative, the organization to which Sawant belongs, she argues that many people are ready to talk about bigger change than Democrats have been willing to countenance. "People understand that the market is not working for them. The market is making them homeless," Sawant says. "The market is making them cityless."

SEVERAL DAYS AFTER THE ALL PILGRIMS MEETing, Sawant sits in her City Hall office, sharing thoughts on everything from the future of the left to her unexpected path to political office. Although she's often portrayed in the media as a bomb-thrower, she comes across as warm and relaxed, smiling frequently, laughing easily. Behind her, George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* and Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed* peek from a bookshelf, alongside books by Matt Taibbi, Glenn Greenwald, Eric Foner, and others. Alone at her desk, she seems less the fiery activist than the earnest professor, holding office hours.

"People would ask me, especially when we were running the campaign, 'Aren't you worried about the "S" word?'" Sawant says. "Certainly there is truth to that because of the Cold War–era propaganda and everything. But with the recession and the collapse of the idea of the American dream among generations of American young people who are going to have worse-off standards of living than their parents for the first time in American history—for them it's not so much about the 'S' word. It's the 'C' word. 'Capitalism' is the dirty word."

The seeds of Sawant's own embrace of the "S" word were laid during her childhood in India, where she says she was "obsessed" with the problems of hunger and poverty. It was this obsession that sent her to North Carolina State University to get her PhD in economics, which she completed before moving to Seattle in 2006, and ultimately drew her to Socialist Alternative. The group is a small democratic-socialist organization from the Trotskyist tradition that describes its mission as helping to build an independent, working-class political party that could challenge Democrats and Republicans for power. Sawant had been seeking a political home when, in 2009, she heard a speaker from the group at a political meeting. "It was everything that I was thinking about," she recalls.

> **"People understand that the market is not working for them. The market is making them homeless."**
>
> — Kshama Sawant

Along with Socialist Alternative comrades, Sawant became very active in Occupy Seattle, and helped the occupiers move from their original camp at Westlake Park to the campus of Seattle Central Community College, where she had been teaching economics. But when Occupy began to fade and the drumbeat of a presidential election began to rise, Socialist Alternative decided to run a campaign for the state legislature, one that could demonstrate a political option outside of Democratic or Republican party politics. At first, Sawant laughs, she "fought hard" against being the candidate. "Nobody can even say my name in this country—how are we going to make any impact with my name on the ballot sheet?" But because Socialist Alternative makes all decisions democratically, she was "out-voiced."

David Goldstein remembers when Sawant came into *The Stranger*'s office in 2012, seeking its endorsement for her run against State Representative Jamie Pedersen. Unlike what he calls the "clown socialists" they'd had in the past, she wanted to talk about issues—particularly revenue issues, deeply important in a state that has an incredibly regressive tax structure. The paper wound up endorsing her not in the race she had chosen, but as a write-in candidate against Speaker of the House Frank Chopp. She wound up getting 29 percent of the vote against the speaker.

That, says Sawant, was a "phenomenal result" for an openly socialist candidate, and from there Socialist Alternative cast about for its next step. It landed on the City Council, and 16-year incumbent Richard Conlin, whom Cruickshank describes as "a nice guy" who had pushed a "happiness initiative" at City Hall but had been the sole City Council vote against a paid-sick-leave ordinance.

At this point in the conversation, Sawant deftly turns the subject from herself to organizing strategy, insisting that, tempting as it might be to focus on her story, "the electoral campaigns or having this City Council office is not about me, because it is so easy to tear down an individual." It's the kind of comment that could sound like false humility, except that Sawant's rise really wasn't about her, at least not entirely.

In November 2012, shortly before Sawant launched her campaign, the first fast-food workers had gone on strike in New York City, calling for $15 an hour and a union. Fifteen dollars an hour, Sawant says, felt like a number that

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Sarah Jaffe is a reporting fellow at the Nation Institute and is currently writing a book about social movements since the financial crisis. She is a co-host of Dissent *magazine's Belabored podcast.*

would make a good political demand, something that came not from the minds of a small group of Seattle socialists but from a growing movement of working-class people. And closer to home, in SeaTac, a town of about 27,000 that surrounds the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, a union-led campaign to organize low-wage airport employees was growing more intense. They too had decided to press for a $15 living wage, in their case through a ballot initiative.

Heather Weiner, a communications consultant on the campaign, remembers the first time Sawant showed up at a hearing at the SeaTac City Council around the ballot initiative. "Here we've lined up all these airport workers and all these local residents and all these other people, and Kshama and her crew show up in their red shirts from Seattle and start giving socialist rhetoric," Weiner says. "I remember as a spokesperson I was just like, 'What are you doing?' But the crowd *loved* her. I thought, I don't need to control this, I just need to sit back and relax and watch what happens here. You're making me look moderate!"

The combination of the SeaTac campaign, the fast-food strikes, and the elections created a "compression zone" around the $15-an-hour wage, says David Rolf, president of SEIU Local 775 in Washington State. "Between the first striker walking off the job at Taco Bell on the night of May 29 and election day, it was hard to avoid $15 as a subject of civic debate here."

Ed Murray was the second candidate, after Sawant, to endorse the $15-an-hour demand, and it ultimately helped him unseat the incumbent mayor. Buoyed by support for the minimum-wage increase, Sawant was also elected in November 2013. And close by, in SeaTac, the $15-an-hour ballot initiative passed as well.

Once in office, Sawant and Socialist Alternative continued to play the far-left role, demanding more than business leaders were willing to give, as fast-food workers combined strikes and demonstrations with lobby days where they spoke with the City Council members about life on minimum wage (then $9.32 an hour). Martina Phelps, a Seattle McDonald's worker, was inspired by Sawant's repeated appearances alongside the workers; her colleague Malcolm Cooper-Suggs thought her willingness to get arrested with workers was "cool."

"She went into the struggle over the ordinance with the understanding that she was playing a role. She had to be the 'or else,'" Goldstein says. "'Give us something acceptable or else we're going to put something on the ballot and it's so popular that you're going to get $15 now.' Up until the vote came before the Council, there were people, her colleagues, who were surprised she voted yes. She has all these amendments, which they reject, the audience is jeering and booing the other Council members, she's decrying the whole process and how unfair it is, and then they do the vote and it's 9–0."

Sawant calls the narrative that city leaders and business leaders sat down and achieved consensus "a fairy tale," and beyond that, a disempowering message that erases the efforts of working people. To her, it matters that a workers' movement achieved its goal. "Big business is not going to come and sit at a table with you and say, 'Help us figure out how we can give you $15 an hour,'" she says. "Every victory that we've ever won has been wrenched out of the hands of big business against their tooth-and-nail opposition."

> **"They handed one of the largest publicly owned utilities in the country to a socialist. She was thrilled."**
>
> — David Goldstein

Socialist SOTU: Sawant delivers the official Socialist Alternative response to President Barack Obama's 2015 State of the Union Address.

The compromise bill gave the workers their first raise, to $11 an hour, this April 1, and it will increase incrementally from there. However, the International Franchise Association has filed a lawsuit to kill the bill, while another lawsuit in SeaTac excluded the airport itself from the $15-an-hour wage there. Nevertheless, the wins are hugely significant. Says Council member O'Brien, "All these things we were comfortable saying, 'Well, you can't change, these things are just too hard to change,' now you're saying, 'Wait a minute, I've got to go back and reevaluate all that stuff.'"

Crystal Thompson has worked at Domino's Pizza for six years without a raise. Though she's excited about the $15-an-hour win, she notes that it's not going to solve all her problems. "Rent's gone up, food's gone up, prices have gone up everywhere. It's pushing more and more people out of the city." Thompson and her son share an apartment with a roommate; her son sleeps on the couch.

Housing is a major concern all across Seattle, and Sawant is passionate about the topic—although she has little time for the divide-and-conquer politics that pits low- or middle-wage workers against high-tech workers. "At the end of the day," she says, "I think the real enemy that we need to identify is the capitalist system itself and a political ruling class in this city that is very single-mindedly in the service of corporate welfare, which means massive giveaways to big real-estate giants."

In her quest to rein in these giants, Sawant can get wonky, going deep on everything from "linkage fees" paid by developers to strengthening tenants-rights laws. Rent control, for instance, is currently banned by Washington State law, but Sawant and Nick Licata, her Council colleague, are pushing to overturn that, recently hosting a massive town-hall meeting on affordable housing that needed two rooms to hold all the attendees. She and her staff are also researching the possibility of issuing city bonds to pay for thousands of new city-owned and -operated below-market-rate housing units.

Denechia Powell, the housing activist, credits Sawant with helping to stop Stepping Forward, a plan from the Seattle Housing Authority that would have increased rents in public and Section 8 housing by more than 400 percent over a five-year period. Many of the tenants in public housing are immigrants, Powell notes, and for immigrant women in particular it was powerful to have Sawant rally with them.

Energy policy has also become a space where Sawant is making waves. Goldstein jokes that the energy committee is usually the "death committee" in the Council, but "they handed one of the largest publicly owned utilities in the

country over to a socialist. She was thrilled!"

When she began to look into the utility Seattle City Light, Sawant says, her staff found that big corporations like Boeing pay less per kilowatt-hour for electricity than an ordinary household. Instead of getting a bulk discount, she argues, Boeing should pay more—"from an economic-inequality standpoint, but, also, Seattle has conservation goals. How are we going to achieve those goals if big corporations like Boeing have no incentive to save energy?" The policy hasn't changed yet, but, she says, one or two of her colleagues are beginning to agree. She did succeed, along with protesters, in preventing the CEO of City Light from getting a possible $120,000 more per year (he already made around $245,000).

The biggest criticism of Sawant, mostly from her right, has been that she is an outlier, or too divisive to accomplish much. "She hasn't changed anything," David Meinert, a business owner who was part of the panel that worked on the minimum-wage bill, told *The Seattle Times*. "She's barely cast a vote that's made a difference." Sawant's opponent in the upcoming City Council elections, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle CEO Pamela Banks, criticized her style, saying, "I've learned over my career that you solve more problems with a telephone than a megaphone." More recently, *The Seattle Times* wrote that "Sawant's slash-and-burn style is as unbecoming as it is ineffective," in response to a battle over the replacement for departing City Council member Sally Clark.

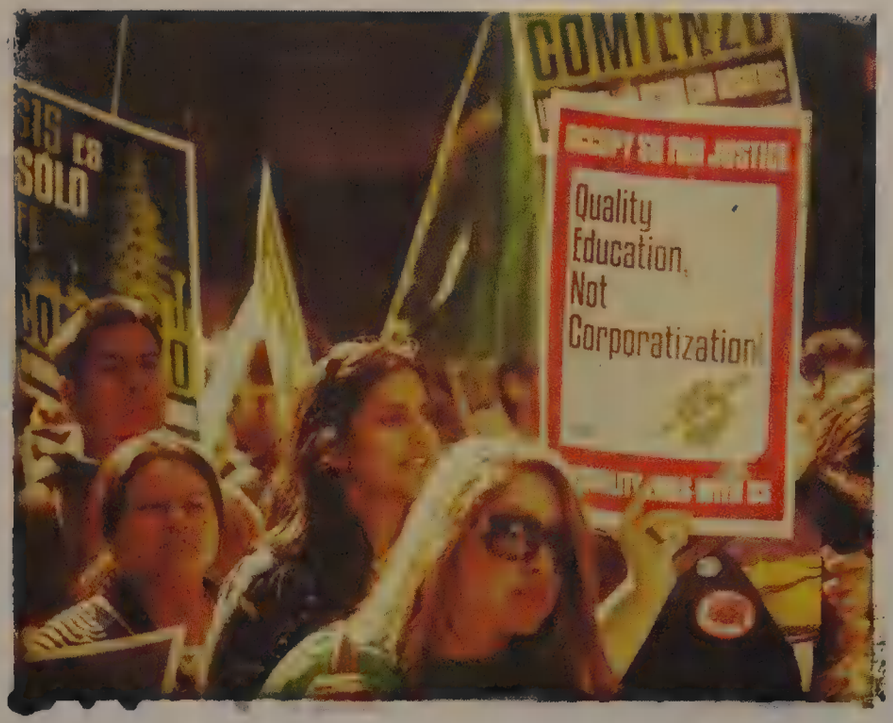
Heather Weiner attributes this criticism to a fetish for consensus, while others shrug off the idea that it's even accurate. Goldstein says, "This idea that she's not a swing vote so therefore she's not influential is such BS. Of course she's not the swing vote! She's the anchor! On the far left!"

According to David Rolf, a poll in 2014 found that Sawant was the most popular Council member in her own district and the second-most-popular citywide—while also having the highest negatives. Those negatives occasionally spill over in especially unpleasant ways. Weiner particularly bristles at the sexism she hears. "'Crazy bitch.' I see that a lot. What it says to me is that there's a lot of fear."

As for the question of what Sawant has accomplished besides $15 an hour, Weiner laughs. "Why does there have to be more? Is it because she's raised expectations so high?"

ALONG WITH THE TRADITION OF THE PROPHETIC outsider, there has been another track for socialist politicians in America: the "sewer socialists" who took office in cities from New York to Milwaukee to Seattle in the mid-20th century and worked to make those cities livable for their working-class residents, build infrastructure, and challenge corruption. As *The Nation*'s John Nichols noted in his book *The "S" Word*, "Socialists and socialism had their greatest success throughout the twentieth century, and continue to succeed in the twenty-first, at the most human level of our politics."

As Sawant's first reelection fight approaches, changes in Seattle's election process are leading her to stress this side of her politics. At the same time that voters in Seattle threw out their incumbent mayor and voted in a socialist in 2013, they also voted to change the way the nine-member City Council is elected. Previously, Council seats were citywide, but now seven members will come from districts, and they're all up for reelection in 2015. Sawant supported the measure, and is running in District 3, which includes Capitol Hill.



Onward! Sawant marches through the streets of Seattle as part of the Fight for $15 national day of action on April 15, 2015.

Sawant is adamant that the Democratic Party does not serve the needs of working people.

It's not yet clear what kind of impact the shift to district elections will have on the City Council—or on Sawant's prospects. She made her name on citywide issues that have national resonance, but with district elections, Mike O'Brien notes, issues like potholes and crosswalks can crowd out big-picture discussions about inequality. However, district elections also make it easier to win with less money, through door knocking and local meetings like Sawant's LGBTQ forum, allowing progressive candidates to connect with voters on issues that mean a lot to them.

The short period between elections means Sawant has had less time than other candidates to prove her worth. Yet, despite the lingering criticism that she is too "militant" for Seattle, Robert Cruickshank believes she's won over the city's progressives. Her Council district overlaps two state legislative districts, and Democratic groups in both districts voted not to endorse a Democratic challenger. Because she is not part of the party, she is ineligible to receive the party's endorsement, so her supporters campaigned instead for a non-endorsement—and got it.

Despite the support she gets from Democrats, though, Sawant is adamant that the Democratic Party does not serve the needs of working people. Before he'd announced his presidential campaign, she called on Bernie Sanders to run as an independent rather than within the Democratic Party. "Victory in 2016 for the US left would be for somebody of the stature, name recognition, and the confidence that people have in him, somebody on those credentials running an absolutely bold independent working-class challenge to the big-business candidates," she says.

Sanders can still have a big impact running within the Democratic Party, she thinks, but that won't be enough. Instead, she says, "the starting steps are for the labor movement to build, to run its own candidates, like Socialist Alternative ran its candidate on an unambiguously pro-working-class platform, as a defiant rejection of the two-party, big-business establishment."

"It's not going to happen overnight," she notes. But it's a start. ■

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(continued from page 2)

of an infrastructure system failing from old age, poor funding, and what appears to be an intentional effort to underfund and eventually privatize these assets.

Everything is broken: our roads, water systems, bridges, air traffic control, schools. But nothing is more broken than the attitude our Congress displays toward the things that keep our society connected and moving. For all the talk of the need for domestic manufacturing jobs, none can be more beneficial than remanufacturing our own infrastructure. We must rebuild the things that made this country great—roads, the electrical grid, bridges, and levees—as well as upgrade our telecommunications and air traffic control systems.

In Washington, the greatest fear seems to be losing an election. But many Americans find themselves living in fear of far more serious consequences, because too many of us lack reliable public transportation and drive on roads and bridges that are overcrowded and beyond their service life. Many of us rely on water systems that are one chemical spill away from being toxic. We should all be mindful of the collateral damage that is coming our way if we don't get our infrastructure fixed soon.

Manny G. Gomez
Henderson, Nev.

Blame Canada

Michael Moore is a serious and seriously funny man, but he needs a refresher course in modern Canada, which he keeps using as a sort of Peaceable Kingdom [most recently in "Michael Moore for President," in the April 6 issue]. Since 2006, when Stephen Harper's Conservatives began to rule us, we have gone backward, from a passably liberal place to a reactionary sidekick of GOP Amerika. Harper, a member of the fundamentalist Alliance Church, believes in the Rapture but not in climate change; in private enterprise but not in the CBC, whose budget he keeps cutting; in Likudist Israel (we are its "best friend") but not in gun control (he has dismantled our long-gun registry and had its records destroyed). He has gutted our Fisheries Act, Environmental Assessment process, Navigable Waters Protection Act, and the Canada Health Accord. He pushed through ratification of the secretive Canada-China FIPA, had the Canada Revenue Agency launch audits of charities opposed to his policies, and has muzzled government scientists from speaking inconvenient truths. As *The Nation* reported [September 29, 2014], his Conservatives have bullied our First Nations tribes, whose annual support payments now depend on their accepting reduced rights, and censured the only doctor up in Fort Chipewyan for saying that the high rate of rare cancers there were related to tar-sands pollution. If Harper is reelected this fall, there soon may not be much left for Moore to tell fables about.

Richard Bevis
Vancouver, British Columbia

Correction

In "Ecuador's Battle for Environmental Justice Against Chevron," by James North (June 22/29), the New York court testimony of Alberto Guerra, described in the last full paragraph of the right column on page 23, was garbled. It should have stated that Guerra testified that lawyers Donziger and Fajardo had agreed to pay a $500,000 bribe to let them ghostwrite the Ecuadoran trial judge's final opinion.

Books & the Arts.

MARTY LEDERHANDLER / AP

18 West 11th Street in Greenwich Village, New York City, destroyed by a bomb made there by the Weathermen, March 6, 1970.

Ignorant Good Will

by RICK PERLSTEIN

The terrorists attacked their target in New York on a sunny Tuesday in autumn—but not the sunny Tuesday we now commemorate. The year was 1981—a year in which, as Bryan Burrough observes in *Days of Rage*, his sprawling history of America's post-'60s radical underground, the country had suffered the greatest number of fatalities from terrorism in that era of radical violence. That figure would not be surpassed again until the year the World Trade Center was bombed.

The 1981 attack is one of dozens of acts of cinematic violence narrated in *Days of Rage*, and it encapsulates some of the book's key themes. A leader in the group that staged the attack was a man named Sekou Odinga. Born Nathaniel Burns, he had returned from Algeria, where he'd worked as a deputy for Eldridge Cleaver, who had established the Black Panther Party's "international section" there (and was accorded official diplomatic recognition from Algiers). "We have a solidarity group in China," Cleaver told a writer visiting his lair, which had a giant electrified map with colored lights that could be flicked on and off to represent revolutionary battlefronts all over the world. "Its chairman is Chairman Mao." Cleaver also informally directed a new group from Algeria: the Black Liberation Army, a collection of terrorist cells that crisscrossed the United States, ambushing cops in cold blood. Upon its dissolution, Odinga helped start an even more shadowy and brutal organization, so informal that it went nameless, although its members referred to it as "the Family."

The Family had an advantage over the Black Liberation Army, what its leaders called a "white edge": a band of worshipful white fellow travelers who provided cover by renting cars and forging IDs. What the disciples didn't know was that in the New York action, Mutulu Shakur and his comrades were going to carry out a "revolutionary expropriation" in order to buy cocaine. While two white accomplices, Kathy Boudin and David Gilbert, waited in a U-Haul truck, Shakur and two other men leaped out of a nearby van, shot a Brink's guard to death, loaded $1.6 million in cash into the van, and sped off. Police officers intercepted the U-Haul vehicle and were about to release its white occupants—eyewitnesses had said the criminals were black—when Shakur's crew sprang out of the rented truck and raked Rockland County's finest with machine-gun fire, killing two. Boudin and Gilbert ended up holding the bag, which had been the plan all along.

Rick Perlstein is the author, most recently, of The Invisible Bridge: The Fall of Nixon and the Rise of Reagan.

Days of Rage
America's Radical Underground, the FBI, and the Forgotten Age of Revolutionary Violence.
By Bryan Burrough.
Penguin Press. 585 pp. $29.95.

If the attack proved anything, it was the extraordinary resilience of "revolutionary" violence in the United States long after it had any conceivable chance of bringing about social change (assuming that such a chance existed in the first place). It also drew attention to the cultish behavior of the Family, their systematic exploitation of revolution-besotted acolytes, the incompetence of law-enforcement agencies in tracking them down, the underground network that assisted them, and the blood—barrels of it.

No less noteworthy is that even in our terror-obsessed era, the scale of this decade-long florescence of revolutionary domestic terrorism has been all but forgotten. "People always ask why I did what I did, and I tell them I was a soldier in a war," Sekou Odinga told Burrough. "And they always say, 'What war?'"

Burrough begins *Days of Rage* with the story of the New Left's first convert to armed struggle, an oddball named Sam Melville, who started bombing random Manhattan banks shortly after enjoying the music at Woodstock and later died in the uprising at Attica. But the best history is always about the backstories—the flashback reconstructions explaining how a mentality that may strike us as alien today made perfect sense in the minds of those who shared it at the time.

Consider Mutulu Shakur. Born Jeral Williams in 1950, he became an early proponent of the Republic of New Afrika movement. His career as a militant began in a hospital. In 1970, members of the Young Lords, a Puerto Rican version of the Black Panthers that started as a street gang, occupied the auditorium of a tumbledown hospital in the South Bronx to protest its inadequacies. They demanded a heroin clinic. Harried hospital administrators were amenable; they needed a heroin clinic. So they let the Young Lords start one. Nourished with nearly $1 million in state and city funds, Lincoln Detox soon grew into the South Bronx's largest drug-treatment facility.

Its program prescribed a theory popularized by Malcolm X: "that the plague of drugs was a scheme concocted by a white government to oppress blacks," as Burrough puts it. Shakur started volunteering; his specialty was acupuncture. Another part of the treatment was studying a pamphlet subtitled "Heroin and Imperialism," which advised that a commitment to armed struggle was a more effective analgesic than methadone. Lincoln Detox soon became what Burrough describes as "a kind of clubhouse for New York's radical elite"; for instance, medical supplies purchased with government funds—"by the truckload"—were turned over to the Black Liberation Army to assist it in its campaign of murdering cops. Crazy stuff, to be sure. But in the South Bronx of the 1970s—where cops were heavily involved in the heroin trade, and building owners found it more profitable to torch their property for the insurance than to rent it out—it's easy to understand why taking the fight to the police seemed a more realistic route to social change than voting for Hubert Humphrey had been in 1968.

Burrough draws an equally rich portrait of the prison solidarity movement of the 1970s. He traces it to innocent roots: the work in the 1950s of Caryl Chessman, a serial rapist who brilliantly focused the attention of the nation on the brutality of California's prison system in a series of lawsuits and bestselling books that earned clemency appeals from the likes of Eleanor Roosevelt. Chessman was executed in 1960, but not before his activism had jump-started the legislative process that led California to outlaw capital punishment. It would be the prison solidarity movement's high point. "By 1967, after a bloody riot at San Quentin," Burrough recounts, "California prison facilities had embarked on a cycle of violent and retaliatory crackdowns that would endure for years. It brought racial polarization, along with an avalanche of legal challenges and, among black inmates at least, racial unity and a taste for open confrontation with guards and wardens."

Prisoners with time on their hands read books. Two volumes popular among black inmates were *Mini-Manual of the Urban Guerrilla*, by the Brazilian Marxist Carlos Marighella, and Régis Debray's *Revolution in the Revolution?* Both spun fanciful notions of how a Cuban-style overthrow of government could be effected, even in industrial powers like the United States. In 1972, one incarcerated adherent of the theory wrote a book of his own, *Blood in My Eye*, in which he averred: "We must accept the eventuality of bringing the U.S.A. to its knees; accept the closing off of critical sections of the city with barbed wire, armored pig carriers crisscrossing the streets, soldiers everywhere, tommy guns pointed at stomach level, smoke curling black against the daylight sky, the smell of cordite, house-to-house searches, doors being kicked in, the commonness of death."

A certain type of white radical accepted this conclusion, too. "All through 1965 and 1966," Burrough observes, the members of Students for a Democratic Society "peopled myriad civil rights and antiwar demonstrations, hundreds of them, but a kind of malaise soon set in. Every month brought more and larger protests. Yet there seemed to be little improvement in black civil rights, and more American soldiers poured into Southeast Asia every day." A spiral of militancy resulted. Some came to see America's prisons not as marginal to the Land of the Free but as its naked essence. It was an idea pioneered by Eldridge Cleaver, Burrough writes, who argued "that the most genuine 'revolutionaries' were those who were most oppressed: black prison inmates and gangbangers—an idea that appealed strongly to white radicals yearning for a taste of black authenticity." After all, if you were a Marx-minded revolutionary serially disappointed with the stubborn refusal of one designated oppressed class after another—blue-collar workers, white students, Third World peasants—to rise up against the machine in precisely the way your theory predicted, where better to turn for salvation than the most wretched places in America?

Their favorite hero was the author of *Blood in My Eye*. George Jackson was 12 when he carried out his first mugging. At 15, he was locked up in juvenile detention, escaped, was arrested again after knifing a man, escaped again, was recaptured, received parole, and then, after one final arrest in 1961 for a gas-station stickup just before his 19th birthday, spent the rest of his life behind bars. There he thrived, because he was more ruthless, cruel, and violent than anyone his fellow inmates had ever seen. "And you want to know why he was what dumbass people call a prison leader?" one of them later reflected to Burrough. "'Cause everyone else was shit-scared of him."

Liberals ended up lionizing Jackson. In January 1970, during a brawl between white and black prisoners at Soledad penitentiary, a white guard intervened on the side of the whites via four well-placed rifle shots—"justifiable homicide," the grand jury ruled. Jackson led the gang that avenged the three deaths by throwing a rookie guard off a third-floor railing. The lawyer defending Jackson from the gas chamber, Fay Stender, fell in love with him, as she had with an earlier client, Huey Newton. As part of her public-relations efforts, she arranged for a collection of Jackson's prison letters to be published as *Soledad Brother* (excising some, however, like the missive in which he speculated about the possibility of poisoning Chicago's water supply). Jean Genet was enlisted to write the preface. In between the book's conception and its publication, Jackson's brother Jonathan led an armed raid on a Marin County courthouse, taking hostages in a bid to negotiate George's freedom and, in a shoot-out with police, blowing a judge's face off with a shotgun allegedly provided by the recently fired UCLA profes-

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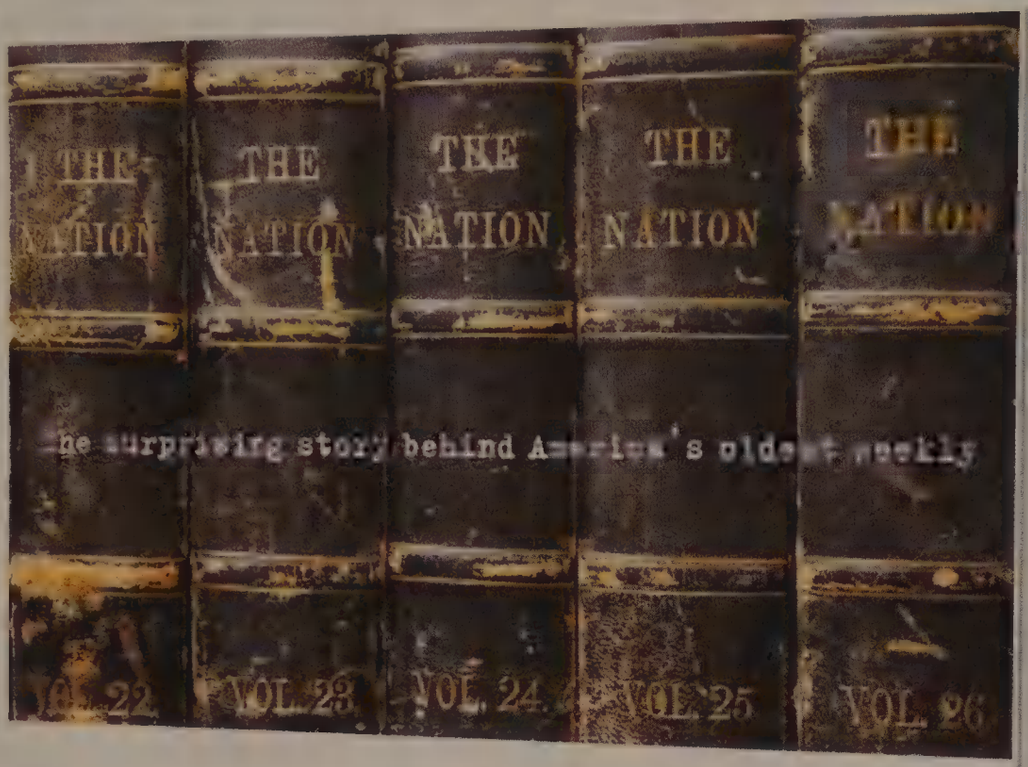

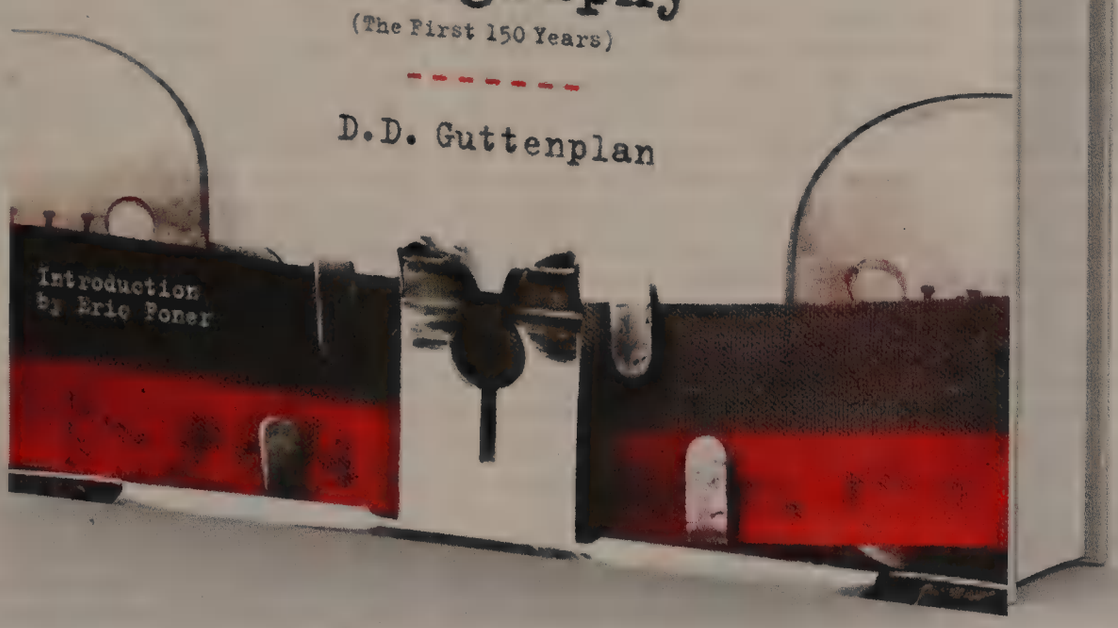

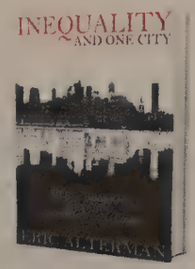

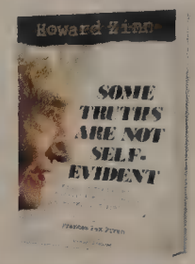

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sor Angela Davis. A sensation was born.

The New York Times Book Review assigned *Soledad Brother* to the Black Power radical Julius Lester. Lester—who, in a column syndicated the previous year in underground newspapers, had applauded a sniper who'd cut down "known enemies of the black community" from a rooftop in East St. Louis as the moral equivalent of the Vietcong—praised Jackson's book because it would make whites nostalgic "for the good old days when all they had to think about was Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown." (The newspaper of record appreciatively subtitled the essay "Black rage to live.") Christopher Lehmann-Haupt's review in the daily *Times* was hardly less appreciative. The *Book Review* subsequently ran an interview with Jackson by Jessica Mitford, and later named *Soledad Brother* one of their notable books of the year. *The New York Times Magazine* profiled Jackson; the columnist Anthony Lewis praised him. After Jackson was cut down while attempting to take over a cell block ("The dragon has come!" he roared), 2,000 people attended his funeral. "During the services," Burrough notes, "the Weather Underground detonated bombs in protest," and San Quentin officials steeled themselves for what they feared would be an armed invasion.

The fawning coverage of Jackson in the *Times* continued, and *Soledad Brother* began appearing in anthologies. *Autre temps, autre moeurs.*

Ever since reading *Days of Rage*, I've been engaged in a lively online discussion with '60s veterans over whether the events and beliefs described by Burrough should matter to anyone on the left today. American radicals aren't robbing banks or planting bombs, and even when they were—in 1977, say, when the *San Francisco Chronicle* published a "box score" of bombings since 1971, including 23 at Pacific Gas and Electric (once with a demand for a 10 percent reduction in utility rates) and nine at area Safeway stores, and when more than 100,000 office workers were evacuated from their buildings in a single day because of bomb threats—the number of actual participants only reached the dozens. Even the veterans that Burrough interviews are hard-pressed to prove their activities accomplished anything. (There was, however, a knockoff effect. Have you ever wondered why restrooms are always locked in office buildings? Because in the 1970s, terrorists loved toilets: They frequently locked from within, and the stalls afforded privacy for setting a bomb.)

Myself, I do think these issues matter—not so much for understanding the bombings and shootings themselves, but for grasping the significance of the support network that the perpetrators enjoyed, sustained by the ignorant good will of folks who'd never dream of picking up a gun.

Some of that support came from rank intimidation. The members of Lincoln Detox were able to liberate $1 million from New York's dwindling coffers, largely to pay the salaries of people who did no work, with stunts like invading the offices of the city's Health and Hospitals Corporation, barricading themselves inside, and smashing windows and furniture. But a lot of their power derived from the same sort of romantic infatuation with antiestablishment carnage that made *Bonnie and Clyde* a hit among radical college kids in the late 1960s.

Consider the reaction of *Soledad Brother*'s editor, Gregory Armstrong, upon meeting George Jackson: "Everything about him is flashing and shining and glistening and his body seems to ripple like a cat's. As he moves forward to take my hand, I literally feel myself being pulled into the vortex of his energy. There is no way I can look away. He gives me a radiant smile of sheer sensual delight, the kind of smile you save for someone you really love." Stender's largely female public-relations cadres, according to an observer quoted by Burrough, "each picked their favorite Soledad brother and were kind of oohing and ah-ing over them," as if with John, Paul, George, and Ringo five years earlier. "This was the revolution, baby," recalled one lawyer to the underground, Elizabeth Fink—who was honorably self-critical in interviews with Burrough—"and they were the fighters."

Sex was crucial currency within these circles. At meetings of the SDS, shortly before a radical faction of it became the Weathermen, Bernardine Dohrn "liked to wear a button with the slogan CUNNILINGUS IS COOL, FELLATIO IS FUN," Burrough writes. A member named Steve Tappis remembered "her blouse open to the navel." Tappis had had enough. "Finally, I said 'Bernardine! Would you please button your blouse?' She just pulled out one of her breasts and, in that cold way of hers, said, 'You like this tit? Take it.'" ("Weather crud": n. genital infection incubated among Weather Underground cadres building revolutionary solidarity via compulsory orgies.)

A voyeuristic media exploited the underground's glamour. One night in May 1973, a group of BLA soldiers traveling the New Jersey Turnpike were pulled over by troopers. One of the cops discovered an ammunition clip from an automatic pistol. A militant named Joanne Chesimard pulled a gun from beneath her right leg, shooting the cop at point-blank range (he survived). The gun battle that followed (in which another trooper was fatally shot in the head) was the subject of a breathless six-page spread in the next day's *Daily News*, which labeled her "the high priestess of the cop-hating Black Liberation Army" and the "black Joan of Arc." The power of that frisson has not faded. Currently, a group of Berkeley students is demanding that a campus building housing the Department of African-American Studies be renamed after Chesimard's nom de guerre, Assata Shakur. "We want the renaming [for] someone, Assata Shakur, who we feel…represents us black students," a spokesman for the Berkeley black student union said.

They're kids. Excuse them their ignorance. It's harder to excuse the aged Bay Area radicals who, Burrough points out, "hang George Jackson's picture to this day."

By January 1970, as Burrough tells the story, Weathermen cells were engaged in a manic competition to see which could execute the most lunatic action first—a race that ended when explosives intended for a massacre of soldiers and their dates at a Fort Dix dance prematurely detonated, and backhoes started scooping body parts from the ruins of a Greenwich Village townhouse that a Weatherman had commandeered from her out-of-town parents to serve as a bomb factory.

On February 12, 1970, according to new interviews and evidence gathered by Burrough, a Weatherman bomb went off in the parking lot of Berkeley police headquarters. A second bomb exploded 30 seconds later. Miraculously, no one died, even though it happened during a shift change—"frankly, to maximize deaths," said a Weatherman involved that night. Then, four days later, a bomb packed with industrial fence staples went off just before a shift change at a station house in San Francisco, killing one officer. That crime was never solved. "Needless to say," Burrough writes, "the Weathermen who were in San Francisco at the time all deny involvement." (Burrough's book is a useful primer on legal jeopardy, with otherwise forthcoming interviewees suddenly going silent when active, unsolved cases come up.)

James Weinstein, the late socialist historian and publisher of *In These Times*, had a cousin in the Weathermen named John Jacobs, known as "JJ," whom Burrough describes as the most violence-besotted member of the group. JJ evaded arrest, dying in obscurity in 1997. I once asked Weinstein, who was a friend of mine, what he would

have done had his cousin appeared on his doorstep in the interim. Answered this man who since the 1950s had devoted his life to radical politics: "I would have turned him over to the FBI for destroying the left!"

That's a little much, perhaps. But it's still remarkable how passions that could have been put to more productive ends were wasted abetting narcissistic violence—even in the boardrooms of liberal bureaucracies. The most remorselessly violent sector of the left underground were the fighters of the Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional Puertorriqueña—the FALN, which announced itself to the world by exploding five bombs in quick succession in Manhattan on a single day in 1974. The action was coordinated with the aboveground arm of the independence movement, which had staged a triumphant rally before a full house at Madison Square Garden, starring luminaries like Jane Fonda, the following evening. The bombings and the rally were planned by the FALN's front group, the National Commission on Hispanic Affairs. The NCHA operated out of donated space in the national headquarters building of the Episcopal Church. Their executive director was basically "the quartermaster of the FALN," Fink explained to Burrough.

Neither the revelers at Madison Square Garden nor the officers of the Episcopal Church had any reason to know that terrorists were exploiting their hospitality. But FBI agents investigating the FALN's most horrifying act—the bombing of the historic Fraunces Tavern in Lower Manhattan, which killed four diners during the lunch hour—discovered evidence in the church's basement that the FALN's communiqués had been produced on an NCHA typewriter, and that the plane tickets for spiriting the bombers out of town had been purchased by the NCHA's executive director. The Episcopal bishop of New York responded by calling the subpoenas for the records of the terrorist organization an attempt to "prevent the church from funding progressive Hispanic groups." Progressive ministers across the country created a new group, Joint Strategy for Social Action, devoted to organizing against this "illegal campaign against the churches."

I wanted to learn more about Joint Strategy for Social Action, but *Days of Rage* offered little guidance. There are only 85 endnotes for 548 pages of text. Burrough is an astonishingly resourceful reporter. The book teems with sentences like, "'Marvin Doyle' is a pseudonym.... [He] works for a Washington-area think tank, where no one knows his history as a 1970s-era radical." But he owes us more documentation, perhaps on a website: He makes serious charges concerning serious crimes, and, too often, his sourcing is unclear.

Still, the amount of new information is astounding. Burrough paints a rich portrait of one key figure about whom, incredibly, there hasn't been a single sentence written in all the reams published about the underground. His name is Ron Fliegelman, and he taught himself to become the Weathermen's master bomb manufacturer. ("A grandfather with a patchy white beard, he can be seen most mornings walking a tiny white poodle through the streets of his neighborhood, which is called Park Slope.") Here's Burrough talking to Fliegelman's former partner, Cathy Wilkerson, while she is walking their grandson:

> "I've been told what your role was."
>
> Her eyelids flutter. She reaches down and begins to rock the stroller. "You think you know?" she says.
>
> "Yes," I say. "You were the West Coast bomb maker."
>
> There is a long pause. She glances down at her grandson. He begins to spit up. She reaches down, wipes off his chin, and takes him into her arms, gently sliding a bottle between his lips.
>
> "Look," she finally says. "I felt I had a responsibility to make the design safe after the Townhouse." The bomb design, she means. "I didn't want any more people to die."

There's material for a dozen screenplays in this book, and set pieces aplenty. At one point, an "expro" is foiled when one of the patients Mutulu Shakur, the acupuncture specialist at Lincoln Detox, recruited for the job suffers a back spasm; that scene writes itself. The movie I most want to see adapted from *Days of Rage* is of Burrough getting the story, tracking down all these long-forgotten graybeards and grandmas, his eyes growing wide as he learns the tricks of the trade, thereupon depicted in flashbacks. One sequence could be "Weatherman wanders a graveyard." (That was how you established an ironclad fake identity: finding the name of someone born around the same time as you, and using the identity to get a replacement birth certificate.) Another could be "A Black Liberation Army cadre rolls down all the car windows." (That was what you did when you were getting pulled over: "if you have to shoot, you don't want glass exploding all over you.")

But movies are made mostly to entertain. Burrough does more, offering lessons to absorb. One involves the inner logic that leads sensitive souls of various ideological predilections to embrace violence for political ends. The number of American leftists studying bomb-making over the last couple of decades may be vanishingly small, but the number of Americans is not: Timothy McVeigh and his drums of fertilizer; the Tsarnaev brothers and their pressure cookers; abortion-clinic bombers; young Minnesotans scouring the Internet for ways to travel to Syria to join ISIS—all of them are seekers of a certain kind of Dostoyevskian fantasy of communion. They are radical narcissists detached from reality, certain that their spark would ignite the great silent masses who share the same sense of futility and frustration. They see society as a powder keg almost ready to blow. The book provides rich raw material to draw these connections, even if Burrough's own analysis, and his engagement with scholarship about what makes violent extremists tick, is thin. ("What the underground movement was truly about—what it was always about—was the plight of black Americans": This is his reductive conclusion, when his own evidence points to much more.)

Another lesson is about the counterproductive patterns of thought and action recognizable on the left today, such as the notion that there is no problem with radicalism that can't be solved by a purer version of radicalism, or that the participant in any argument who can establish him- or herself as the most oppressed is thereby naturally owed intellectual deference, even abasement, or that purity of intention is the best marker of political nobility. These notions come from somewhere; they have an intellectual history. The sort of people whose personal dialectic culminated in the building of bombs helped gestate these persistent mistakes.

Some of them are still making them today. "For the hundreds if not thousands of whites who engaged in some form of armed resistance," former Weathermen member Cathy Wilkerson wrote to Burrough in a pathetic apologia, "it mattered that we *chose* to step out of the encasing, protective cover of privilege—class and/or race—and take equal risk with those who had no choice but to fight for a better future." She seems to think her biggest mistake was not abasing herself enough: "That our strategic choices were corrupted by the inherited arrogance of privilege is of secondary importance." Above all, she boasts, it *felt* good: "To be complicit made us feel desperately unclean, rotting from within. While in retrospect our strategic choices were rooted in arrogance and ignorance, there are no regrets about

the choice to do our best to acknowledge that rot and to rid ourselves of it."

Bill Ayers, another former Weatherman, thinks this way too. In a creepily evasive 2008 interview on NPR's *Fresh Air*, in two memoirs, even in speeches to high schools, Ayers presents himself as an earnest antiwar activist who never committed an act of terrorism, never intended to hurt anyone. He wraps the US massacres in Vietnam around himself as if they gave him a snow-white blanket of moral innocence. He insists that "through most of my life...I've been engaged in direct, nonviolent action, to oppose injustice, to fight for peace." But Ayers was not an antiwar activist. He was a war activist. The Weathermen literally did declare war on the United States. At a bizarre little conclave in Flint, Michigan, at the end of 1969 that they called the National War Council and nicknamed the "Wargasm," they gameplanned their silly little war out. (This was the event where Ayers's present wife, Bernardine Dohrn, celebrated the Manson murderers: "Dig it! First they killed those pigs, then they ate dinner in the same room with them. They even shoved a fork into the victim's stomach! Wild!") Their original plan was to kill policemen, former Weatherman Howie Machtinger told Burrough—hence the bombings in Berkeley and San Francisco, which I doubt would count as activism intended to end a war.

"Part of the dishonest narrative that's gone on," Ayers unrepentantly insisted to *Fresh Air* host Terry Gross, "has been the idea, promoted by some people on Fox News and others, that we were involved in lots of killings, which is absolutely not true." That's lawyerly: not a lot of killings, necessarily. "Did you guys kill cops in the '60s?" he describes himself being asked by a policeman friend, before answering: "Absolutely not." And this is technically true: The Berkeley police-station bombing—where, Burrough argues, they only *tried* to kill some cops—was in 1970. As for Ayers's own role, Burrough says it was managerial, "shuttling between collectives in Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and Buffalo." In Detroit, for instance, according to FBI informant Larry Grathwohl, Ayers led a discussion at which he brought up the trial of several Detroit cops for killing three black men during the 1967 riot:

> "Where did [those] pigs get the money to hire decent lawyers?" Ayers asked. "The Police Officers Association put up the money." When someone mentioned that the association had a headquarters downtown, Ayers pounced. "We blast that fucking building to hell.... We wait for them to have a meeting, or a social event. Then we strike."

Ayers then pulled out a hand-drawn map, Grathwohl said, and assigned tasks, while pooh-poohing Grathwohl himself for pointing out that a nearby restaurant filled with black customers might be collateral damage: "We can't protect all the innocent people in the world."

If nothing like this ever happened, Ayers should answer the evidence. He is reluctant to do so. The editor of *Days of Rage*, Scott Moyers, told me that Ayers and Dohrn refused all interview requests from Burrough over a period of years. The plan described by Grathwohl sounds a lot like the one that was hatched in New York to bomb a social event at Fort Dix, which led to the Greenwich Village townhouse tragedy, and which Ayers adamantly claims to have known nothing about in advance. Perhaps he didn't—although Burrough writes that Ayers "almost certainly knew."

And Burrough is thorough in laying out the anguished process in which, post-townhouse, the Weather Underground decided to turn instead to late-night bombings of property. "Weatherman, Weatherman, what do you do? Blow up a toilet every year or two," ran the doggerel composed by the hapless and corrupt FBI squad charged with hunting them down. These bombings continued through 1975, two years after the Vietnam War ended, which makes it hard to see them as antiwar.

Speaking with Terry Gross, Ayers equivocated about being a "leader" of the Weather Underground: "We were a collective group." Maybe so, but the leadership cadre of this "collective group" managed to live very well on the lam, while the foot soldiers existed in squalor. Among the latter was Ayers's own brother, who at one point was so poor he had to sleep in a tent in a Los Angeles city park. And the leaders? To quote Rick Ayers on the crowd around Bill, "they always ate good food and they always slept between clean sheets." ■

KATHY WILLENS / AP

The High Line, on the edge of gentrifying Chelsea, September 17, 2014.

Another City

by MICHAEL SORKIN

A few months ago, I was part of a neighborhood committee that paid a visit to the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission to argue for the expansion of the TriBeCa Historic Districts. To some, given the neighborhood's rampant fabulousness and its irreversible ascent into post-hipsterdom, this might seem like a vanity project of the one percent. Our argument, though, was not simply about the physical qualities of the place. The piece of the neighborhood we sought to have added to the district is home to a considerable number of rent-regulated apartments, and we think that its inclusion would have the effect of preserving the long-term housing prospects of these neighbors. The commission should find a way to protect a historic social ecology that has symbiotically taken root in the neighborhood.

Our argument went nowhere because the commission's focus is on architecture, not people. We knew that the case for integrating

historic and community preservation would not be entirely clear, but so what: We wanted to emphasize that certain principles about housing should be sacrosanct. The most fundamental ones are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: protection against "arbitrary interference with…privacy, family, [and] home," and "freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state." The declaration also stipulates an "adequate" standard of living, including housing and social services, participation in community cultural life, and a raft of other opportunities at the vital core of liberal democracy.

While Mayor Bill de Blasio's "progressive agenda" includes nothing that will displeasure the near left, it is strangely mute on a key component of his municipal ambitions: housing and the right to it. Getting more money into the hands of exploited workers and a little less into those of the plutocracy would redistribute wealth. Unarticulated in de Blasio's 14 faultless points, however, is any idea about the redistribution of *space*, the primary raw material of wealth in the city. The mayor has come in for heavy criticism of a housing policy that not only relies primarily on subsidies to developers to induce trickle-down but also is likely to increase the physical gap between rich and poor. This worsening of the geography of privilege is evident not simply in the spiraling prices in Williamsburg or TriBeCa but in a policy that focuses on poor neighborhoods as the most logical locales for new housing for the poor. A case in point is the administration's choice of East New York as one of three pilot sites for its policy. The neighborhood is already rife with speculation in anticipation of the city's intervention, and the risk is that rising land prices will inexorably define affordability upward—and out of reach of many of the people already living there.

Like his predecessors, de Blasio is caught in a dilemma about what it means to plan the city. His proposal, "Housing New York," has the revelatory subtitle "Zoning for Quality and Affordability." The replacement of planning by zoning is characteristic of the negotiation between public and private interests that's the stuff of any urban-development policy. While there's general agreement that all cities must have some structures of constraint, drawing the line between the perks of property and propriety is never easy. In New York, this operates in both the realm of ownership (public, private, collective, institutional) and the "right" to transform property in terms of its use, size, performance, and appearance. The basis for both the operation and the progress of our system is that each of these constraints is subject to change—through negotiation, technological and social evolution, corruption, and reconceptualization. Paradigms shift and accidents will happen: One idea of the city succeeds another.

We are in the midst of such a shift, and it's visible all over town. The city is cluttered with construction projects, most of which rise dramatically above the default textures in which they are supposed to fit. Downtown, apartment buildings rising in SoHo are double and triple the height of their neighbors. "Hudson Square" is on building-growth hormones, including many additions on top of existing structures. Below Canal Street, a clutch of super-tall towers dominates the skyline. TriBeCa is going fast. According to research by my redoubtable neighbor and chair of the Tribeca Trust, Lynn Ellsworth, 11 neighborhood buildings have been demolished in the past year, and at least 19 could become targets of the wrecking ball. These include the six along West Broadway just purchased by Cape Advisors for $50 million (at an astounding $1,000 per square foot), which *Crain's* speculates will require apartments selling at a minimum of $3,000 per foot (do the math!) to turn a profit. Ellsworth—the organizer of our trip to Landmarks—estimates that the loss of all these buildings will eliminate about 120 rent-stabilized apartments and at least 40 small businesses. Not gonna be any poor doors here!

While few tears need be shed for those lucky enough to freehold in this great spot, TriBeCa's transformation could become far more general, both socially and architecturally. The place is a lab, because it's full of primitive accumulators for whom a "good neighborhood" is understood primarily as one in which property values increase as quickly as possible, and "architecture" is seen as a price multiplier. This is the classic gentrification formula: The residual value of a neighborhood's historic "character" sanctions successor forms, creating, in the case of TriBeCa, the spreading rash of monstrosities that loom over its low-rise fabric and arrogate its prestige. We're the happy rats who can't resist going back to the cocaine dispenser, and, because the price gyre is so fundamentally what the neighborhood has become, the war between the fiscal and physical is thrown into vivid relief.

What's happening in TriBeCa is not simply a further "tipping" of the neighborhood. It represents a very particular—but strategically unspoken—assumption of the mayor's planners: The city works best by forced mobility, and is best understood as a map of

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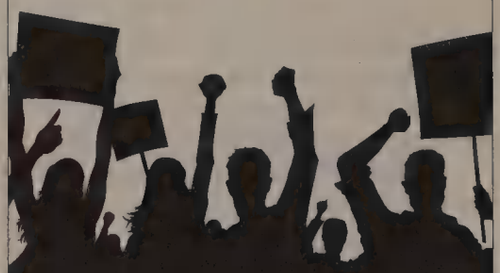
"WHAT CAN I DO?"



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the circulation of capital, with the human consequences—including attachments to place—reduced to "externalities." One can scarcely pick up a copy of *The New York Times* without reading about the latest hot neighborhood transformed by its differential affordability: Families priced out of Boerum Hill hightail it to more affordable locales like Jackson Heights. Assimilated to the B-school romance of "disruption"—celebrated as the central practice of canny CEOs—this destabilized state is not simply typical of New York City but of the country as a whole, as Americans face concerns about housing and job security, and are frequently forced to relocate over their working lives.

The cruel economics of mobility also have an enervated aesthetic side. The city has too long been celebrated for the creativity of its destruction, the dynamism of its demolitions and replacements, the jackhammers gouging the streets and the cranes and towers scraping the sky. That is surely part of our self-image and not without its thrills, but its false first principle is that disruption is an absolute. Such a too-licentious willingness to tear things down complements another assumption of current planning: that density, too, is an absolute. This particular idea—which is surely channeled, in part, by Carl Weisbrod, the director of the Department of City Planning—has become neoliberal writ and is bolstered by a cadre of academics, including the enabling enthusiasts for "hyper-urban development" at Columbia University's Center for Urban Real Estate, which has advocated, without apparent irony, filling in New York Harbor to annex Governors Island as a massive development zone. The numbers are impressive, but the premise is nuts. More recent studies of where to locate housing units are, like those of the DCP, diagrammatic to a fault, tiny massing models devoid of any nonquantifiable considerations of character. Whatever the question, density is always the answer.

Housing affordability is at a crisis stage, a symptom of a more endemic inequality that de Blasio's progressive agenda and impulses seek to redress. The vital questions now are whether the inherited strategy of using subsidies to cajole philanthropy from developers will continue to work; whether the existing stock of affordable housing can be protected; whether a widespread policy of uneven development can be managed; whether planning coordination of new housing with necessary transport, educational, cultural, recreational, and environmental improvements can be achieved; and whether the form of this new approach will be equitable and urbane.

This will be tested all over the city, and there are reasons for both skepticism and hope. Skepticism because of what seems like a doubling down on former mayor Michael Bloomberg's development deals and rampant rezoning. The element of the de Blasio protocols that's receiving the most pushback from mainstream preservation organizations and progressive public officials is a zoning amendment that will allow up to a 31 percent increase in height in so-called contextual districts. According to the official definition, "contextual zoning regulates the height and bulk of new buildings, their setback from the street line, and their width along the street frontage, to produce buildings that are consistent with existing neighborhood character." The consensus among the opposition is that this densification will be a double negative: The increased size of new buildings will disrupt a neighborhood's formal character, and enormous pressure will be placed on existing buildings when incentives are offered to their owners and developers to tear them down and replace them with bigger, more expensive structures—producing, in the end, a context of no more context.

The reason for hope is that the mayor is supporting some very good, indeed progressive, policies: renewal of the rent laws, permanent housing for the homeless, and additional protections for tenants facing harassment and eviction. More, he has just announced a comprehensive initiative to bring public housing—a huge store of affordable housing that the city directly controls—back from the brink. Nothing could be more urgent, given the widespread deterioration, mediocre design, poor community integration, and unfortunate location of a large number of projects in flood zones (damage from Hurricane Sandy was severe). But here, too, the proposal is not yet more than a numbers game, with virtually no attention paid to questions of place and character.

The plan begins with a variety of administrative streamlinings (and an effort to collect rents from the approximately one-quarter of tenants who are in varying degrees of arrears), and only time will tell if these tactics will realize their projected fiscal turnaround. But its central proposition is to utilize "vacant" land within the projects for new construction, applying the general densification policy to new terrain. That such land exists is due to the architectural approach behind the projects—the high modernist vision of "towers in the park," which in the case of the New York City Housing Authority includes not simply copious landscaped areas but a large number of surface parking places (the reduction of parking requirements is one of the sensible aspects of the administration's general housing policy). Because of this, many NYCHA projects are built to densities that are less than the underlying zoning allows, leaving what is technically a buildable surplus—free air. Any addition, though, will both change context and add to the pressures for new services and infrastructure. De Blasio's proposal is, at the "structural" level, the same as what Bloomberg bruited about: turning over this "excess" land and space to private developers.

Whatever the developers' plans, they will certainly transform the character of the projects. Opinion about these places has shifted somewhat in recent years. A reflexive, Jane Jacobs–like animus to their sterility has been overtaken by a more nuanced appreciation of their bowered, campuslike interruption of the street grid's dense regularity. This bucolic view is not without limits: The projects direly need an admixture of nonresidential uses, serious attention to their public open spaces, and a redesign of their inhospitable and grim lower floors. And, their uniformity, utilitarian detailing, cheap finishes, and uninspired architecture desperately want reinvention. This problem is not exclusive to New York, and cities around the world must consider the patterns that will both renew and succeed the millions of units built according to this model. A number of hopeful prototypes for recuperating these places (as opposed to demolishing them and leaving their tenants with vouchers or just the finger) are beginning to emerge.

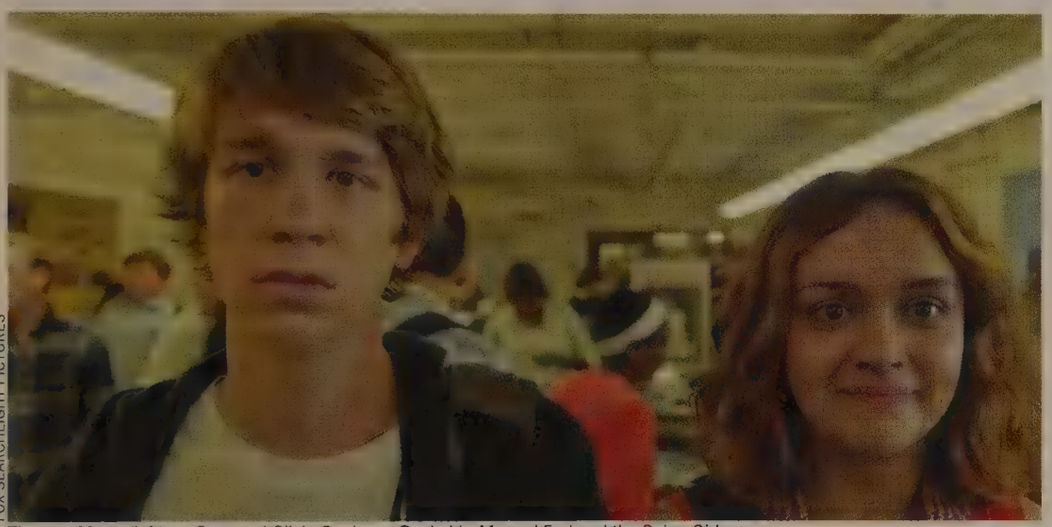
Because any general case against densification remains contested, the question devolves on how to do it and for whom. I have a fairly reflexive animosity to the handover of public property (and rights) to narrowly private interests. These deals are only viable when developers feel they have more to gain than they must give back, and so each of these exchanges is, by definition, a bad deal for the public. But, given the deficit in public revenue—those housing projects were built with federal money that has long since slowed to a trickle—the municipality is forced into bed with the only people with cash. If one accepts this premise, as de Blasio has, then the overriding issue is the resulting mix of tolerance and the proportionality of the trade-off.

For a straight housing deal during the Bloomberg years, the price point was 20 percent affordable units for the strictly voluntary bulk bonus. De Blasio is looking to increase the price to 30 percent and make it mandatory (although there's no move to implement

this so far). And he's looking to do better still with the projects. Here, the proposal is for a two-tiered system, including one in which NYCHA land would be leased (in a number of as-yet-to-be-specified complexes) to developers who would be obliged to provide 50 percent affordability, and another in which land at three complexes (two in Brooklyn, one in the Bronx) would be leased to developers for $200 million in a 10-year deal, for which they would build 10,000 "low-rent" units.

Many details bedevil this arrangement. What will attract developers to accept a cross-subsidy from market-rate housing in neighborhoods in which there's no market for it? What will happen to the 10,000 units after 10 years? How can the administration lock in affordability after its term expires? And, to get back to the place where I began, how will the design of all this construction and amendment help secure not simply the fiscal health of NYCHA but environmental excellence and healthier, more livable, and complete neighborhoods. The just-released report contains only the vaguest, most notional images of transformation and none that even begin to suggest how the huge quantities of new housing will be placed in the chosen sites.

The fiscal tail is wagging the design dog, and this is what unites the transformation of the projects with that of TriBeCa. Just as the blight of luxury towers rising around Central Park or Grand Central is really no more than the decorative extrusion of the underlying lots, the pure monetization of space, the city risks treating place as a matter of speculation rather than care, finesse, and the medium of true distributive equity. Besides, it isn't clear whether the massive displacements, demolitions, and reengineering of our class and spatial structure will result in any increase in affordable housing: We've been losing it at a rate that far exceeds even the rosiest predictions for its replacement. ■



FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

Thomas Mann (left) as Greg and Olivia Cooke as Rachel in *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl.*

Strange Worlds

by STUART KLAWANS

As if you needed further evidence of my faulty judgment, in my previous column I said I was waiting "like everybody else" to see *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Now the box-office results are in, and it's plain that only a minority of us had been impatient for kinesthetic delights to hurtle into the frame from every side and at all times, never as you'd expect, while dystopian horrors blast back out of the screen with an equally endless inventiveness, here clanking with a grotesquerie of jerry-rigged chains and motors, there roaring with the excess of a rock musician shooting flames from his guitar, as Tom Hardy in an iron mask is raised up on an armored dune buggy like a hood-ornament crucifix and a crew-cut Charlize Theron commands the churning desert with her cold blue gaze, glinting under a coat of crankcase grease, all so the film can incite women everywhere to rise up with her, our one-armed Imperator Furiosa, and overthrow war-loving, Earth-devouring, mechanistic patriarchy.

Other people wanted to see *Pitch Perfect 2*.

Without prejudice to that jaunty a cappella comedy, I will say that its commercial triumph over *Mad Max: Fury Road* shows that I've fallen onto the dark side of a generational divide. It's not just that the plurality of the theatergoing audience cannot recall the glories of George Miller's original *Mad Max* trilogy, the most recent of which was released 30 years ago. Research (meaning chats with my daughter and a random sample of her friends) demonstrates that kids today neither recognize nor desire a cinema like Miller's, which does to the methods and imagery of pop movies what Jimi Hendrix did to the old-style electric blues, and to a similarly outrageous purpose. Despite the robust overseas ticket sales for *Fury Road*, the domestic appetite for this kind of filmmaking seems to have withered, leaving us with a young mainstream audience that wants to see genre conventions fulfilled, not exploded. Have I mentioned *San Andreas*?

No—I don't want to talk about *San Andreas*. I'd rather dedicate two more paragraphs to *Mad Max: Fury Road*, knowing that few other films this year are likely to be as impressive. It's like a simoom, a conquering Amazon, a burning bush. You don't so much watch it as enter its presence—and once there, you find that it does not stoop to explain itself. After all of 30 seconds' worth of introductory voice-over, which is not so much an exposition as a groan of despair from Max, the action starts and the guidance ends. Where do they come from, all these dead-white, half-naked, shave-skulled men? Why is it a form of blessing for them to have their mouths sprayed with aerosol paint, while their leader intones, "You will ride eternal, shiny and chrome"? How would you translate "He's a crazy smig who eats schlanger"? What makes you think you've got time to ask? Unlike action directors of the plodding sort, George Miller doesn't ask you to understand the deliriously strange world into which he throws you headlong. He just wants to change the parts you recognize.

Mad Max: Fury Road has been skewing a little old in its audience—an inevitability, when a film is R-rated—but it's got more rebellious energy than anything else around, even though its writer-director is a septuagenarian and its totally kick-ass heroine is played by an actress who is pushing 40, the age at which Hollywood wants to stamp EXPIRED on a woman's forehead. This is not to imply that *Fury Road* is an entry in the current cycle of geezerfests such as *The Expendables* and *RED*, which convene actors in middle age or beyond to prove that their stunt doubles can still blow things up. Miller and Theron have no time for such jokey self-congratulation. They're too busy actually ripping up the screen.

Maybe action movies, like youth itself, are wasted on the young. I'm pretty sure movies about youth are wasted on them.

A case in point: *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*, a much-touted high-school drama that emerged with two awards from the 2015 Sundance Festival and is now getting the full mini-major push from Fox Searchlight. Here, too, we're dealing with a cycle: films made from young-adult novels about finding your way in life when you're smart, quirky, tragic, and brave—like all other high-school kids, in other words, only more so. My daughter and her friends can tell you that *The Fault in Our Stars* is the best movie of this type ever made, and will remain so until *Paper Towns* is released later this summer. *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* is another competitor for the title. The problem is that it wasn't really made for my daughter but for me, and I don't like it.

Written by Jesse Andrews and based on his novel of the same title, *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* is narrated in flashback by a high-school senior who is pale, shaggy, gangling but otherwise nondescript (an appropriate choice by the actor, Thomas Mann, given the character's determination never to draw attention to himself), living in an American city that seems aging and Northern but is left similarly blank (which is a less fitting decision, considering that the place is eventually revealed to be the historic and richly flavorful Pittsburgh). The Earl of the title is the narrator's only friend (RJ Cyler), who is black. He therefore lives in the poor part of town and is more forthright and sexually advanced than the narrator and better with his fists. The dying girl, who has been diagnosed with leukemia, is a classmate named Rachel (Olivia Cooke), whose distinguishing traits (other than her disease) are an overwhelmingly yellow bedroom and Jewish birth. You may gauge the depth of *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* merely by the circumstance that Rachel's mother, Mrs. Kushner, is played by that *yiddishe balabusta* Molly Shannon.

What can you hold on to in this fog of halfhearted stereotypes and insubstantial settings? Only the confiding, self-deprecating tone of the narrator and the cleverness of the director, Alfonso Gomez-Rejon. A former protégé of filmmakers including Nora Ephron, Martin Scorsese, and Alejandro González Iñárritu, Gomez-Rejon is bursting with ideas for disrupting mere realism and opening up the movie's style. He tosses off stop-motion animations, forced perspectives, jump cuts, mobile points of view, and even a Spike Lee–style actor-on-a-dolly shot. Above all, though, he makes the most of the shared cinephilia of the narrator and Earl, who since grammar school days have directed and starred in no-budget parodies of famous films.

Here's where *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* betrays its intention to address me and not my daughter. The films that Earl and the narrator have goofily remade include *Breathless*; *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*; *The Seventh Seal*; *Midnight Cowboy*; and *Apocalypse Now*. (What, no *Andrei Rublev*?) Let me stipulate that there really are high-school kids, rare ones, who know and love these pictures. That reality is irrelevant to a movie that skirts realism for the sake of showing off its director's skills, while persistently flattering viewers (older ones, mostly) on their knowledge of film history.

It's possible, I suppose, that moviegoers of the characters' age will recognize themselves in this story and flock to see it. To them, the film parodies might be just a pleasant but cute blur in the background, while older viewers (of the sort who have been promoting the picture) will take them as proof that we have an innovative new talent in Gomez-Rejon. But talent, in this case, is little more than a disguise for a story that is too true to its title. *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* is not about Earl (who is never more than a sidekick) or the girl (who is a plot contrivance, and sometimes seems to know it) but only about "me," the narrator. The film's long season of melodrama and cinematic trickery has been organized for his benefit alone, so he can abandon his self-doubt and know at the end that he's lovable, caring, and (as he'd always suspected) a little better than most people.

Perhaps *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl* will elicit some rueful understanding for the pain and folly of youth. Its deeper sympathies, though, lie with older viewers, the ones who may watch it in self-approval and say, "I turned out all right, didn't I? Just like that kid."

I suggest that for the sequel, Gomez-Rejon and his narrator do a funny remake of *Ivan's Childhood*.

Another film about movie-obsessed youth, and another Sundance winner, Crystal Moselle's documentary *The Wolfpack* is a simultaneously fascinating and frustrating profile of the Angulo family: seven children brought up in a public-housing project on Manhattan's Lower East Side by a Midwestern mother and a Peruvian father. The latter, animated by a mixture of homemade Hinduism, thwarted

Outside Less

I have been outside less, I have taken to saying,
in the days since my daughter was born—
passive, as though it were somebody

else who bore her. And *bore her*, I also have
taken to saying, as though she were a hole.

I have witnessed a woodpecker force,

through the week, a gape in my neighbor's
barn side. I have watched as my daughter
knocks, woodpecker-like, her searching mouth

into my breast. But I don't mean to say she
instills in my body an absence. What nothing

assembles within me was already there.

NATALIE SHAPERO

artistic ambition, political disaffection, and shock at the grunginess of New York City, gave the children the names of Indian gods, decreed that their hair would never be cut, insisted that they be homeschooled by the mother (for which the state paid her), and kept all seven kids locked in the family's crumbling apartment. According to one son's testimony, the siblings would venture outside only at long intervals, under chaperone. "One particular year, we never got out at all."

But as much as the father disapproved of New York, he loved American movies and had the children watch them day and night. Here is Moselle's irresistible hook for *The Wolfpack*. Not only did the children know about the world mostly through movies, but they began to videotape their own versions of films, using painstakingly copied scripts, scavenged costumes, and props and sets constructed from the stuff at hand: cereal boxes, gaffer's tape, yoga mats. It was a way to give themselves a life—and it gives *The Wolfpack* life, too, from the moment you see Mukunda, Govinda, Bhagavan, and their siblings re-create *Reservoir Dogs* within a cramped hallway and a piss-colored bedroom.

Will these people, too, be able to look back someday and say, "I turned out all right"? It's possible to give a tentative yes to the question. At a certain point, when they were in their teens, the boys began to defy their father and go outside, which led to police intervention and then a paternal abdication. Judging by the interviews, which Moselle conducted after the liberation, the brothers have become remarkably articulate, poised, and engaging young men, who are well in touch with their pain and anger. Still, it's as hard to predict a future for the Angulos as it is to make heads or tails of Moselle's film.

The Wolfpack will be instructive for anyone who thinks *Grey Gardens* was easy to make. It's clear that the access Moselle gained to the Angulos was intimate but intermittent, and she couldn't figure out how to work around the holes in her material. The chronology is fuzzy, when not baffling; brothers slip in and out (sometimes it seems as if there are five, then six); a sister is introduced and then overlooked; and with the parents, Moselle never establishes a consistent distance, seeming to function variously as confidante, field researcher, and accuser.

To Moselle's credit, she avoids turning *The Wolfpack* into a freak show (just barely). And yet, as you sit there gaping, you long for more insight, about the people you're watching but also about how Moselle made this film.

So let's turn from movies that look at young people with a mixture of supposed immediacy and cinephilic obsession. It's time to recommend two pictures that take the older-but-wiser view: Bill Pohlad's *Love & Mercy* and Mia Hansen-Løve's *Eden*.

Eden is the second film (after *Goodbye First Love*) in which Hansen-Løve has followed a character from adolescence to adulthood, tracing the course of artistic aspirations, romantic entanglements, familial tensions, and the struggle to pay the rent. This time the protagonist is a young man named Paul (Félix de Givry), the art form is DJ'ing (with an emphasis on the French style of garage), and the enemy is time itself. Paul simply doesn't want to grow up, even when tastes change in electronic dance music, his debts pile up, the lining of his nose burns out, and an ex-girlfriend leaves him for the second time. Hansen-Løve watches it all dispassionately and not without judgment, from 1992 until almost the present, but at the same time gives Paul his due. No wonder he wants the rave never to end. It feels as if half of this long film comprises extended shots of crowds immersed in colored lights and thrumming music, where time doesn't exist.

As for Pohlad's *Love & Mercy*—a period drama, redemption narrative, and authorized biography—it tells a story about the Beach Boys' Brian Wilson in two different decades, as played by two actors. The Wilson of the mid-1960s, shown at his moment of triumph and crack-up with *Pet Sounds* and "Good Vibrations," is brilliantly embodied by Paul Dano, who looks uncannily like Wilson, sings a bit like him too (no small feat), and puts his fingers on the right keys when playing the piano. The Wilson of the 1980s—a shambling figure, more or less a captive of his psychotherapist—is played by John Cusack with a repertoire of touching but familiar *Rain Man* tics and postures. The primary focus in the 1980s narrative, though, is on Melinda Ledbetter (the excellent Elizabeth Banks), a Los Angeles Cadillac dealer who met Wilson by chance, cut him loose from his therapist, and eventually married him.

The trick of *Love & Mercy*, a good one, is to show the two time periods together, rather than in sequence. The screenplay, by Oren Moverman and Michael Alan Lerner, does not take full advantage of the contrapuntal structure, sometimes falling into standard biopic garrulousness. (I suspect there was a split vision in the writing, too, which wasn't fully resolved.) But when the film works, which is often, its older Wilson makes you shudder for what's happening to his younger self, while the younger one keeps you aware of the world of wonders locked inside his older self's drooping head. ■

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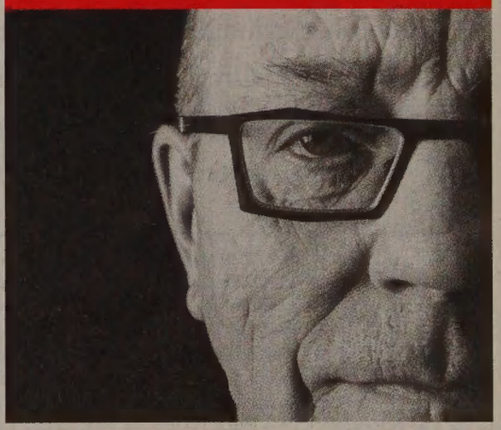
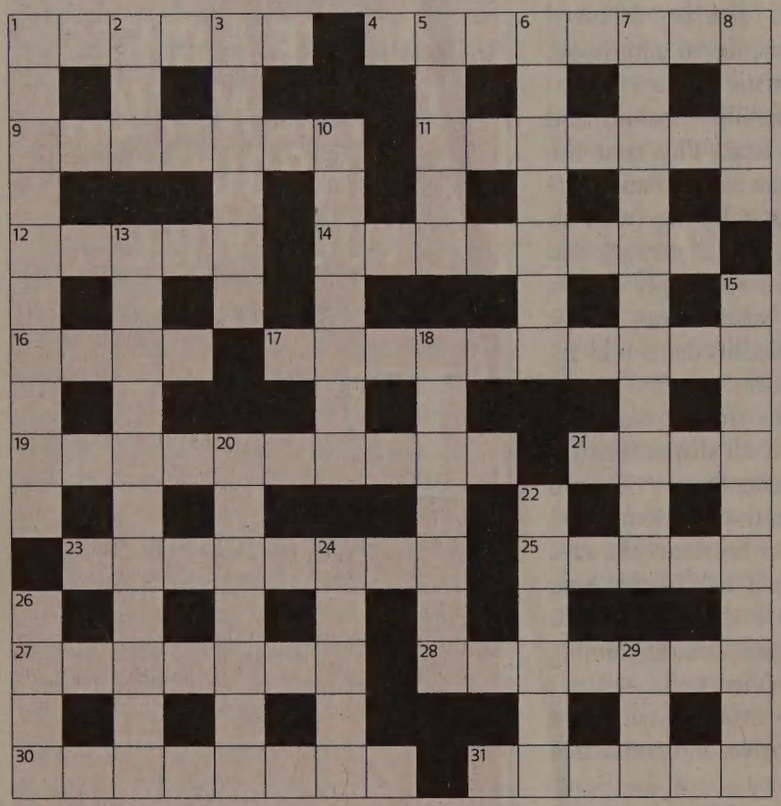


Puzzle No. 3367

JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO



ACROSS

1 Around back of kitchen, attack a pancake (6)

4 Portal opened wide, nearly revolving with effort (8)

9 Money spent unwisely on overtime (3-4)

11 After a short time, cry uncontrollably about launch of evil policy the CIA depends on (7)

12 Carly improved synthetic fiber (5)

14 Mock authority imprisoning myself with Cheney endlessly (8)

16 Small tool to make part of a brake (4)

17 Nineteenth-century artifacts, collected initially in haphazard variation (10)

19 Lives with different man, almost exactly as hot (10)

21 Reversed sushi ingredient's decrease? (4)

23 Jerk in retreat dodges grapefruit, lemons, and oranges (8)

25 Lots of grass in Oregon, ultimately breaking ordinances (5)

27 Protection for a finger that some might say is a thign? (7)

28 How Macbeth introduces himself to Tarzan? That's a gas! (7)

30 Low, deceptive ploy to capture knight in a game you could play with one of the eight classic 31 in the grid (8)

31 *Rolling Stone* includes $1,000 souvenirs (6)

DOWN

1 Pursuing hit, let's recast fashionable vessel (10)

2 and **29** Native's pension consumed (6)

3 1960s art seen in that component of a formal outfit (3,3)

5 Neon Speedo, oddly, is detected by 24 (5)

6 It goes fast, whether heading north or south (7)

7 This is a lot of fun: pound a projectile implement for hauling (11)

8 Timeless toy coming up repeatedly! (2-2)

10 Story involving stray dog (7)

13 Reptile's accordion playing captivates Long Island (11)

15 Vile nastiness engulfing a French composer (5-5)

18 Opening above a door extended inside the majority of building (7)

20 One type of jazz instrument keeps decibels at zero (4,3)

22 Game of chance after sip of beverage is drunk (6)

24 Odor from dump overwhelming mayor at first (5)

26 *Time* edited article (4)

29 See 2

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3366

ACROSS **1** LASTS + UPPER **6** SKI + P **9** CO(PYR[e])IGHT (*Gothic* anag.) **10** O(US)T + S **11** anag. **12** A + NARC + HIST (anag.) **13** YAR (rev.) + DSALE (anag.) **15** L + EDGES **17** hidden **18** DEA + THROW **21** P(OLARB)EAR (*labor* anag.) **22** A + N(V)IL **24** RE(L)IC (rice anag.) **25** [c/B]-RITICISM **26** rev. **27** MAN(GO)S + TEEN

DOWN **1** LE(CH)ERY **2** hidden **3** anag. **4** P(IG)TAILS (*plaits* anag., &lit.) **5** anag. **7** KISSING-ER **8** hidden **10** anag. **14** anag. **16** REAR + MING **17** PA + PYRUS (anag.) **19** 2 defs. **20** anag. **23** V + O + I + CE)

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Kosman and Picciotto explain "How to Work *The Nation*'s Cryptic Puzzles" at thenation.com/puzzle-rules.

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